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CRESSY.

CHAPTER IX.

MEANWHILE, unaware of her husband's sudden relapse to her old border principles and of the visit that had induced it, Mrs. McKinstry was slowly returning from a lugubrious recital of her moods and feelings at the parson's. As she crossed the barren flat and reached the wooded upland midway between the school-house and the ranche, she saw before her the old familiar figure of Seth Davis lounging on the trail. In her habitual loyalty to her husband's feuds she would probably have stalked defiantly past him, notwithstanding her late regrets at the broken engagement, but Seth began to advance awkwardly towards her. In fact, he had noticed the tall, gaunt, plaid-shawled and holland-bonneted figure approaching and had waited for it.

As he seemed intent upon getting in her way she stopped and raised her right hand warningly before her. In spite of the shawl and sun-bonnet, suffering had implanted a rude Runic dignity to her attitude. "Words that hev to be took back, Seth Davis," she said hastily, "hev passed between you and my man. Out of my way, then, that I may pass, too."

"Not much betwixt you and me, Aunt Rachel," he said with slouching depreciation, using the old household title by which he had familiarly known her. "I've nothin' agin you—and I

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kin prove it by wot I'm yer to say. And I ain't trucklin' to yer for myself, for ez far ez me and your'n ez concerned," he continued, with a malevolent glance, "thar ain't gold enough in Caleiforny to make the weddin' ring that could hitch me and Cress together. I want to tell you that you're bein' played; that you're being befooled and bamboozled and honey-fogled. Thet while you're groanin' at class-meeting and Hiram's quo'llin with Dad, and Joe Masters waitin' round to pick up any bone that's throwed him, that sneakin', hypocritical Yankee schoolmaster is draggin' your daughter to h—ll with him on the sly."

"Quit that, Seth Davis," said Mrs. McKinstry sternly, "or be man enough to tell it to a man. That's Hiram's business to know."

"And what if he knows it well enough and winks at it? What if he's willin' enough to truckle to it, to curry favour with them sneakin' Yanks?" said Seth malignantly.

A spasm of savage conviction seized Mrs. McKinstry. But it was more from her jealous fears of her husband's disloyalty than concern for her daughter's transgression. Nevertheless, she said desperately, "It's a lie. Where are your proofs?"

"Proofs?" returned Seth. "Who is it sneaks around the school-house to have private talks with the schoolmaster, and edges him on with Cressy afore folks? Your husband.

Who goes sneakin' off every arternoon with that same cantin' hound of a schoolmaster? Your daughter. Who's been carryin' on together, and hidin' thick enough to be ridden out on a rail together? Your daughter and the schoolmaster. Proofs!—ask anybody. Ask the children. Look yar—yon, Johnny—come here."

He had suddenly directed his voice to a blackberry bush near the trail, from which the curly head of Johnny Filgee had just appeared. That home-returning infant painfully disengaged himself, his slate, his books, and his small dinner-pail half filled with fruit as immature as himself, and came towards them sideways.

"Yer's a dime,¹ Johnny, to git some candy," said Seth, endeavouring to distort his passion-set face into a smile.

Johnny Filgee's small, berry-stained palm promptly closed over the coin.

"Now, don't lie.—Where's Cressy?"

"Kithin' her bo."

"Good boy. What bo?"

Johnny hesitated. He had once seen the schoolmaster and Cressy together; he had heard it whispered by the other children that they loved each other. But looking at Seth and Mrs. McKinstry he felt that something more tremendous than this stupid fact was required of him for grown-up people, and being honest and imaginative he determined that it should be worth the money.

"Speak up, Johnny, don't be afeard to tell."

Johnny was not "afeard"—he was only thinking. He had it! He remembered that he had just seen his paragon, the brilliant Stacey, coming from the boundary woods. What more poetical and startlingly effective than to connect him with Cressy? He replied promptly.

"Mithter Thathathy. He gived her a watch and ring of truly gold. Goin' to be married at Thacramento."

¹ *I.e.* ten cents, the smallest coin then used in California.

"You lyin' limb," said Seth, seizing him roughly. But Mrs. McKinstry interposed.

"Let that brat go," she said with gleaming eyes. "I want to talk to you." Seth released Johnny. "It's a trick," he said, "he's bin put up to it by that Ford."

But Johnny, after securing a safe vantage behind the blackberry bush, determined to give them another trial—with facts.

"I know mor'n that," he called out.

"Git—you measly pup," said Seth savagely.

"I know Theriff Briggth, he rid over the boundary with a lot o' men and horthes," said Johnny, with that hurried delivery with which he was able to estop interruption. "Theed 'em go by. Maur Harrithon theth his dad's goin' to chuck out ole McKinthtry. Hooray!"

Mrs. McKinstry turned her dark face sharply on Seth. "What's that he sez?"

"Nothin' but children's gassin'," he answered, meeting her eyes with an evil consciousness half loutish, half defiant, "and ef it war true, it would only serve Hiram McKinstry right."

She laid her hand upon his shoulder with swift suspicion. "Out o' my way, Seth Davis," she said suddenly, pushing him aside. "Ef this ez any underhanded work of yours, you'll pay for it."

She strode past him in the direction of Johnny, but at the approach of the tall woman with the angry eyes, the boy flew. She hesitated a moment, turned again with a threatening wave of the hand to Seth, and started off rapidly in the direction of the boundary.

She had not placed so much faith in the boy's story as in the vague revelation of evil in Davis's manner. If there was any "cussedness" afoot, Seth, convinced of Cressy's unfaithfulness, and with no further hope of any mediation from the parents, would

know it. Unless Hiram had been warned, he was still lulled in his fatuous dream of civilization. At that time he and his men were in the tules with the stock; to be satisfied, she herself must go to the boundary.

She reached the ridge of the cotton woods and sycamores, and a few hundred yards further brought her to the edge of that gentle southern slope which at last sank into the broad meadow of the debateable ground. In spite of Stacey's invidious criticism of its intrinsic value, this theatre of savage dissension, violence, and bloodshed was by some irony of nature a pastoral landscape of singular and peaceful repose. The soft glacis stretching before her was in spring cerulean with lupins, and later starred with *mariposas*. The meadow was transversely crossed by a curving line of alders that indicated a rare watercourse, of which in the dry season only a single pool remained to flash back the unvarying sky. There had been no attempt at cultivation of this broad expanse; wild oats, mustard, and rank grasses left it a tossing sea of turbulent and variegated colour whose waves rode high enough to engulf horse and rider in their choking depths. Even the traces of human struggle, the uprooted stakes, scattered fence-rails, and empty post holes were for ever hidden under these billows of verdure. Midway of the field and near the water-course arose McKinstry's barn—the solitary human structure whose rude, misshapen, bulging sides and swallow-haunted eaves bursting with hay from the neighbouring pasture, seemed however only an extravagant growth of the prolific soil. Mrs. McKinstry gazed at it anxiously. There was no sign of life or movement near or around it; it stood as it had always stood, deserted and solitary. But turning her eyes to the right, beyond the watercourse, she could see a slight regular undulation of the grassy sea and what appeared to be the drifting on its surface of half-a-dozen slouched hats in the direc-

tion of the alders. There was no longer any doubt; a party from the other side was approaching the border.

A shout and the quick galloping of hoofs behind her sent a thrill of relief to her heart. She had barely time to draw aside as her husband and his followers swept past her down the slope. But it needed not his furious cry, "The Harisonshev sold us out," to tell her that the crisis had come.

She held her breath as the cavalcade diverged, and in open order furiously approached the water-course and she could see a sudden check and hesitation in the movement in the meadow at that unlooked-for onset. Then she thought of the barn. It would be a rallying-point for them if driven back—a tower of defence if besieged. There were arms secreted beneath the hay for such an emergency. She would run there, swing-to its open doors, and get ready to barricade them.

She ran crouchingly, seeking the higher grasses and brambles of the ridge to escape observation from the meadow until she could descend upon the barn from the rear. She threw aside her impeding shawl; her brown holland sun-bonnet, torn off her head and hanging by its strings from her shoulders, let her coarse silver-threaded hair stream like a mane over her back; her face and hands were bleeding from thorns and whitened by dust. But she struggled on fiercely like some hunted animal until she reached the descending trail, when, letting herself go blindly, only withheld by the long grasses she clutched at wildly on either side, she half fell, half stumbled down the slope and emerged beside the barn, breathless and exhausted.

But what a contrast was there! For an instant she could scarcely believe that she had left the ridge with her husband's savage outcry in her ears, and in her eyes the swift vision of his furious cavalcade. The boundary meadow was hidden by the soft lines

of graceful willows in whose dim recesses the figures of the passionate horsemen seemed to have melted forever. There was nothing now to interrupt the long vista of peaceful beauty that stretched before her through this lonely hollow to the distant sleeping hills. The bursting barn in the foreground, heaped with grain that fringed its eaves and bristled from its windows and doors until its unlovely bulk was hidden in trailing feathery outlines; the gentle flutter of wings and soothing twitter of swallows and jays around its open rafters, and the drifting shadows of a few circling crows above it; the drowsy song of bees on the wild mustard that half hid its walls with yellow bloom; the sound of faintly-trickling water in one of those old Indian-haunted springs that had given its name to the locality; all these for an instant touched the senses of this hard fierce woman as she had not been touched since she was a girl. For one brief moment the joys of peace and that matured repose that never had been hers flashed upon her; but with it came the savage consciousness that even now it was being wrested away, and the thought fired her blood again. She listened eagerly for a second in the direction of the meadow; there was no report of firearms—there was yet time to prepare the barn for defence. She ran to the front of the building and seized the latch of the half-closed door. A little feminine cry that was half a laugh came from within, with the rapid rustle of a skirt, and as the door swung open a light figure vanished through the rear window. The slanting sunlight falling in the shadowed interior disclosed only the single, erect figure of the schoolmaster—John Ford.

The first confusion and embarrassment of an interrupted *rendezvous* that had coloured Ford's cheeks, gave way to a look of alarm as he caught sight of the bleeding face and dishevelled figure of Mrs. McKinstry. She saw

it. To her distorted fancy it seemed only a proof of deeper guilt. Without a word she closed the heavy door behind her and swung the huge cross-bar unaided to its place. She then turned and confronted him, wiping the dust from her face and arms with her torn and dangling sun-bonnet in a way that recalled her attitude on the first day he had met her.

"That was Cress with ye?" she said.

He hesitated, still gazing at her in wonder.

"Don't lie."

He started. "I don't propose to," he retorted indignantly. "It was—"

"I don't ask ye how long this yer's bin goin' on," she said, pointing to Cressy's sun-bonnet, a few books, and a scattered nosegay of wild flowers lying on the hay; "and I don't want to know. In five minutes either her father will be here, or them hell-hounds of Harrison's who've sold him out will swarm round this barn to git posses-shun. Ef this yer"—she again pointed contemptuously to the objects just indicated—"means that you've cast your lot with *us* and kalkilate to take our bitter with our sweet, ye'll lift up that stack of hay and bring out a gun to help defend it. Ef you're meanin' anythin' else, Ford, you'll hide yourself in that hay till Hiram comes and has time enough to attend to ye."

"And if I choose to do neither?" he said haughtily.

She looked at him in unutterable scorn. "There's the winder—take it while there's time, afore I bar it. Ef you see Hiram, tell him ye left an old woman behind ye to defend the place whar you uther hide with her darter."

Before he could reply there was a distant report, followed almost directly by another. With a movement of irritation he walked to the window, turned and looked at her—bolted it, and came back.

"Where's that gun?" he said almost rudely.

"I reckon'd that would fetch ye,"

she said dragging away the hay and disclosing a long trough-like box covered with tarpaulin. It proved to contain powder, shot and two guns. He took one.

"I suppose I may know what I am fighting for?" he said drily.

"Ye might say 'Cress' of they"—indicating the direction of the reports—"happen to ask ye," she returned with equal sobriety. "Jess now ye kin take your stand up thar in the loft and see what's comin'."

He did not linger, but climbed to the place assigned him, glad to escape the company of the woman who at that moment he almost hated. In his unreflecting passion for Cressy he had always evaded the thought of this relationship or propinquity; the mother had recalled it to him in a way that imperilled even his passion for the daughter; his mind was wholly preoccupied with the idiotic, exasperating and utterly hopeless position that had been forced upon him. In the bitterness of his spirit his sense of personal danger was so far absorbed that he speculated on the chance bullet in the *mélée* that might end his folly and relieve him of responsibility. Shut up in a barn with a furious woman, in a lawless defence of questionable rights—with the added consciousness that an equally questionable passion had drawn him into it, and that *she* knew it—death seemed to offer the only escape from the explanation he could never give. If another sting could have been added it was the absurd conviction that Cressy would not appreciate his sacrifice, but was perhaps even at that moment calmly congratulating herself on the felicitousness of the complication in which she had left him.

Suddenly he heard a shout and the trampling of horse. The sides of the loft were scantily boarded to allow the extension of the pent-up grain, and between the interstices Ford, without being himself seen, had an uninterrupted view of the plain between him and the line of willows. As he gazed,

five men hurriedly issued from the extreme left and ran towards the barn. McKinstry and his followers simultaneously broke from the same covert further to the right and galloped forward to intercept them. But although mounted, the greater distance they had to traverse brought them to the rear of the building only as the Harrison party came to a sudden halt before the closed and barricaded doors of the usually defenceless barn. The discomfiture of the latter was greeted by a derisive shout from the McKinstry party—albeit, equally astonished. But in that brief moment Ford recognized in the leader of the Harrisons the well-known figure of the Sheriff of Tuolumne. It needed only this to cap the climax of the fatality that seemed to pursue him. He was no longer a lawless opposer of equally lawless forces, but he was actually resisting the law itself. He understood the situation now. It was some idiotic blunder of Uncle Ben's that had precipitated this attack.

The belligerents had already cocked their weapons, although the barn was still a rampart between the parties. But an adroit flanker of McKinstry's, creeping through the tall mustard, managed to take up an enfilading position as the Harrisons advanced to break in the door. A threatening shout from the ambuscaded partisans caused them to hurriedly fall back towards the rear of the barn. There was a pause, and then began the usual Homeric chaff,—with this Western difference that it was cunningly intended to draw the other's fire.

"Why don't you blaze away at the door, you — — — ! It won't hurt ye!"

"He's afraid the bolt will shoot back!" Laughter from the McKinstry's.

"Come outer the tall grass and show yourself, you black, mud-eating gopher."

"He can't. He's dropped his grit and is sarchin' for it." Goading laughter from the Harrisons.

Each man waited for that single shot which would precipitate the fight. Even in their lawlessness the rude instinct of the duello swayed them. The officer of the law recognized the principle as well as its practical advantage in a collision, but he hesitated to sacrifice one of his men in an attack on the barn, which would draw the fire of McKinstry at that necessarily fatal range. As a brave man he would have taken the risk himself, but as a prudent one, he reflected that his hurriedly collected *posse* were all partizans, and if he fell the conflict would resolve itself into a purely partizan struggle without a single unprejudiced witness to justify his conduct in the popular eye. The master also knew this; it had checked his first impulse to come forward as a mediator; his only reliance now was on Mrs. McKinstry's restraint and the sheriff's forbearance. The next instant both seemed to be imperilled.

"Well, why don't you wade in?" sneered Dick McKinstry; "who do you reckon's hidden in the barn?"

"I'll tell ye," said a harsh passionate voice from the hill-side. "It's Cressy McKinstry and the schoolmaster hidin' in the hay."

Both parties turned quickly towards the intruder who had approached them unperceived. But the speech was followed by a more startling revulsion of sentiment as Mrs. McKinstry's voice rang out from the barn, "You lie, Seth Davis!"

The brief advantage offered to the sheriff in Davis's advent as a neutral witness, was utterly lost by this unlooked for revelation of Mrs. McKinstry's presence in the barn! The fates were clearly against him! A woman in the fight, and an old one at that! A white woman to be forcibly ejected! In the whole unwritten code of South-Western chivalry there was no such precedent.

"Stand back," he said disgustedly to his followers, "stand back and let the d—d barn slide. But you, Hiram McKinstry, I'll give *you* five

minutes to shake yourself clear of your wife's petticoats and git!" His blood was up now—the quicker from his momentary weakness and the trick of which he thought himself a dupe.

Again the fatal signal seemed imminent, again it was delayed. For Hiram McKinstry with clanking spurs and rifle in hand stepped from behind the barn, full in the presence of his antagonists.

"Ez to my gitten in five minits," he began in his laziest, drowsiest manner, "we'll see when the time's up. But jest now words hev passed betwixt my wife and Seth Davis. Afore anythin' else goes on yer, he's got to take *his* back. My wife allows he lies; I allow he lies too, and I stan' here to say it."

The right of personal insult to precedence of redress was too old a frontier principle to be gainsaid now. Both parties held back and every eye was turned to where Seth Davis had been standing. But he had disappeared.

Where?

When Mrs. McKinstry hurled her denial from the barn, he had taken advantage of the greater surprise to leap to one of the trusses of hay that projected beyond the loft and secure a footing from which he quickly scrambled through the open scantling to the interior. The master who, startled by his voice, had made his way through the loose grain to the rear, reached it as Seth half crawled, half tumbled through. Their eyes met in a single flash of rage, but before Seth could utter an outcry, the master had dropped his gun, seized him around the neck and crammed a thick handful of the soft hay he had hurriedly snatched up into his face and gasping mouth. A furious but silent struggle ensued; the yielding hay on which they both fell deadened all sound of a scuffle and concealed them from view; masses of it, already loosened by the intruder's entrance, and dislodged in their contortions began to slip through the opening to the ground. The master, still uppermost and holding

Seth firmly down, allowed himself to slip with them, shoving his adversary before him; the maddened Missourian detecting his purpose, made a desperate attempt to change his position, and succeeded in raising his knee against the master's chest. Ford, guarding against what seemed to be only a wrestler's strategy, contented himself by locking the bent knee firmly in that position, and thus unwittingly gave Seth the looked-for opportunity of drawing the bowie knife concealed in his boot leg. He knew his mistake only as Seth violently freed his arm, and threw it upward for the blow. He heard the steel slither like a scythe through the hay, and unlocking his hold desperately threw himself on the uplifted arm. The movement saved him. For the released body of Seth slipped rapidly through the opening, upheld for a single instant on the verge by the grasp of the master's two hands on the arm that still held the knife, and then dropped heavily downward. Even then, the hay that had slipped before him would have broken his fall, but his head came in violent contact with some farming implements standing against the wall, and without a cry he was stretched senseless on the ground. The whole occurrence passed so rapidly and so noiselessly that not only did McKinstry's challenge fall upon his already unconscious ears, but the loosened hay which in the master's struggles to recover himself still continued to slide gently from the loft, actually hid him from the eyes of the spectators who sought him a moment afterwards. A mass of hay and wild oats, dislodged apparently by Mrs. McKinstry in securing her defences, was all that met their eyes; even the woman herself was unconscious of the deadly struggle that had taken place above her.

The master staggered to an upright position half choked and half blinded with dust, turgid and bursting with the rush of blood to his head, but clear and collected in mind, and unremorsefully triumphant. Unconscious of the

real extent of Seth's catastrophe he groped for and seized his gun, examined the cap and eagerly waited for a renewed attack. "He tried to kill me; he would have killed me; if he comes again I must kill him," he kept repeating to himself. It never occurred to him that this was inconsistent with his previous thought—indeed with the whole tenor of his belief. Perhaps the most peaceful man who has been once put in peril of life by an adversary, who has recognized death threatening him in the eye of his antagonist, is by some strange paradox not likely to hold his own life or the life of his adversary as dearly as before. Everything was silent now. The suspense irritated him, he no longer dreaded but even longed for the shot that would precipitate hostilities. What were they doing? Guided by Seth, were they concerting a fresh attack?

Listening more intently he became aware of a distant shouting, and even more distinctly, of the dull, heavy trampling of hoofs. A sudden angry fear that the McKinstry's had been beaten off and were flying—a fear and anger that now for the first time identified him with their cause—came over him, and he scrambled quickly towards the opening below. But the sound was approaching and with it came a voice.

"Hold on there, sheriff!"

It was the voice of the agent Stacey.

There was a pause of reluctant murmuring. But the warning was enforced by a command from another voice—weak, unheroic, but familiar, "I order this yer to stop—right yer!"

A burst of ironical laughter followed. The voice was Uncle Ben's.

"Stand back! This is no time for foolin'," said the sheriff roughly.

"He's right, Sheriff Briggs," said Stacey's voice hurriedly, "you're acting for him; he's the owner of the land."

"What? That Ben Dabney?"

"Yes; he's Daubigny, who bought the title from us."

There was a momentary hush, and then a hurried murmur.

"Which means, gents," rose Uncle

Ben's voice persuasively, "that this yer young man, though far-minded and well-intended, hez bin a leetle too chipper and previous in orderin' out the law. This yer ain't no law matter with *me*, boys. It ain't to be settled by law-papers, nor shot-guns and deringers. It's suthin' to be chawed over sociable-like, between drinks. Ef any harm hez bin done, ef anythin's happened, I'm yer to 'demnify the sheriff, and make it comf'ble all round. Yer know me, boys. I'm talkin'. It's *me*—Dabney, or Daubigny, which ever way you like it."

But in the silence that followed the passions had not yet evidently cooled. It was broken by the sarcastic drawl of Dick McKinstry: "If them Harrisons don't mind heven had their medders trampled over by a few white men, why—"

"The sheriff ez 'demnified for that," interrupted Uncle Ben hastily.

"'N ef Dick McKinstry don't mind the damage to his pants in crawlin' out o' gunshot in the tall grass—"

retorted Joe Harrison.

"I'm yer to settle that, boys," said Uncle Ben cheerfully.

"But who'll settle *this*?" clamoured the voice of the older Harrison from behind the barn where he had stumbled in crossing the fallen hay, "Yer's Seth Davis lyin' in the hay with the top of his head busted. Who's to pay for that?"

There was a rush to the spot, and a quick cry of reaction.

"Whose work is this?" demanded the sheriff's voice, with official severity.

The master uttered an instinctive exclamation of defiance, and dropping quickly to the barn floor, would the next moment have opened the door and declared himself, but Mrs. McKinstry, after a single glance at his determined face, suddenly threw herself before him with an imperious gesture of silence. Then her voice rang clearly from the barn:

"Well, if it's the hound that tried to force his way in yer, I reckon ye kin put that down to ME!"

CHAPTER X.

It was known to Indian Spring, the next day, amid great excitement, that a serious fracas had been prevented on the ill-fated boundary by the dramatic appearance of Uncle Ben Dabney, not only as a peacemaker, but as Mr. Daubigny the *bond fide* purchaser and owner of the land. It was known and accepted with great hilarity that "old marm McKinstry" had defended the barn alone and unaided, with—as variously stated—a pitchfork, an old stable-broom and a pail of dirty water, against Harrison, his party, and the entire able *posse* of the Sheriff of Tuolumne County, with no further damage than a scalp wound which the head of Seth Davis received while falling from the loft of the barn from which he had been dislodged by Mrs. McKinstry and the broom aforesaid. It was known with unanimous approbation that the acquisition of the land-title by a hitherto humble citizen of Indian Spring was a triumph of the settlement over foreign interference. But it was not known that the schoolmaster was a participant in the fight, or even present on the spot. At Mrs. McKinstry's suggestion he had remained concealed in the loft until after the withdrawal of both parties and the still unconscious Seth. When Ford had remonstrated, with the remark that Seth would be sure to declare the truth when he recovered his senses, Mrs. McKinstry smiled grimly: "I reckon when he comes to know *I* was with ye all the time, he'd rather hev it allowed that I licked him than *you*. I don't say he'll let it pass ez far ez you're concerned or won't try to get even with ye, but he won't go round tellin' *why*. However," she added still more grimly, "if you think you're ekul to tellin' the hull story—how ye kem to be yer and that Seth wasn't lyin' arter all when he blurted it out afore 'em—why I sha'n't hinder ye." The master said no more. And indeed for a day or two nothing transpired

to show that Seth was not equally reticent.

Nevertheless Mr. Ford was far from being satisfied with the issue of his adventure. His relations with Cressy were known to the mother, and although she had not again alluded to them, she would probably inform her husband. Yet he could not help noticing, with a mingling of unreasoning relief and equally unreasoning distrust, that she exhibited a scornful unconcern in the matter, apart from the singular use to which she had put it. He could hardly count upon McKinstry, with his heavy blind devotion to Cressy, being as indifferent. On the contrary, he had acquired the impression, without caring to examine it closely, that her father would not be displeased at his marrying Cressy, for it would really amount to that. But here again he was forced to contemplate what he had always avoided, the possible meaning and result of their intimacy. In the reckless, thoughtless, extravagant—yet thus far innocent—indulgence of their mutual passion, he had never spoken of marriage, nor—and it struck him now with the same incongruous mingling of relief and uneasiness—had *she*! Perhaps this might have arisen from some superstitious or sensitive recollection on her part of her previous engagement to Seth, but he remembered now that they had not even exchanged the usual vows of eternal constancy. It may seem strange that in the half-dozen stolen and rapturous interviews which had taken place between these young lovers there had been no suggestion of the future, nor any of those glowing projects for a united destiny peculiar to their years and inexperience. They had lived entirely in a blissful present, with no plans beyond their next rendezvous. In that mysterious and sudden absorption of each other, not only the past, but the future seemed to have been forgotten.

These thoughts were passing through his mind the next afternoon to the prejudice of that calm and studious

repose which the deserted school-house usually superinduced, and which had been so fondly noted by McKinstry and Uncle Ben. The latter had not arrived for his usual lesson; it was possible that undue attention had been attracted to his movements now that his good fortune was known; and the master was alone save for the occasional swooping incursion of a predatory jay in search of crumbs from the children's luncheons, who added apparently querulous insult to the larcenous act. He regretted Uncle Ben's absence, as he wanted to know more about his connection with the Harrison attack and his eventual intentions. Ever since the master emerged from the barn and regained his hotel under cover of the darkness, he had heard only the vaguest rumours, and he purposely avoided direct inquiry.

He had been quite prepared for Cressy's absence from school that morning—indeed in his present vacillating mood he had felt that her presence would have been irksome and embarrassing; but it struck him suddenly and unpleasantly that her easy desertion of him at that critical moment in the barn had not since been followed by the least sign of anxiety to know the result of her mother's interference. What did she imagine had transpired between Mrs. McKinstry and himself? Had she confidently expected her mother's prompt acceptance of the situation and a reconciliation? Was that the reason why she had treated that interruption as lightly as if she were already his recognized betrothed? Had she even calculated upon it? had *she*—? He stopped, his cheek glowing from irritation under the suspicion, and shame at the disloyalty of entertaining it.

Opening his desk, he began to arrange his papers mechanically, when he discovered with a slight feeling of annoyance, that he had placed Cressy's bouquet—now dried and withered—in the same pigeon-hole with the mysterious letters with which he had so

often communed in former days. He at once separated them with a half bitter smile, yet after a moment's hesitation, and with his old sense of attempting to revive a forgotten association, he tried to re-peruse them. But they did not even restrain his straying thoughts, nor prevent him from detecting a singular occurrence. The nearly level sun was, after its old fashion, already hanging the shadowed tassels of the pineboughs like a garland on the wall. But the shadow seemed to have suddenly grown larger and more compact, and he turned with a quick consciousness of some interposing figure at the pane. Nothing however was to be seen. Yet so impressed had he been that he walked to the door and stepped from the porch to discover the intruder. The clearing was deserted, there was a slight rustling in the adjacent laurels, but no human being was visible. Nevertheless the old feeling of security and isolation which had never been quite the same since Mr. McKinstry's confession, seemed now to have fled the sylvan school-house altogether, and he somewhat angrily closed his desk, locked it, and determined to go home.

His way lay through the first belt of pines towards the mining-flat, but to-day from some vague impulse he turned and followed the ridge. He had not proceeded far when he perceived Rupert Filgee lounging before him on the trail, and at a little distance further on his brother Johnny. At the sight of these two favourite pupils Mr. Ford's heart smote him with a consciousness that he had of late neglected them, possibly because Rupert's lofty scorn of the "silly" sex was not as amusing to him as formerly, and possibly because Johnny's curiosity had been at times obtrusive. He however quickened his pace and joined Rupert, laying his hand familiarly as of old on his shoulder. To his surprise the boy received his advances with some constraint and awkwardness, glancing uneasily in the direction of Johnny. A sudden idea crossed Mr. Ford's mind.

"Were you looking for me at the schoolroom just now?"

"No, sir."

"You didn't look in at the window to see if I was there?" continued the master.

"No, sir.

The master glanced at Rupert. Truth telling was a part of Rupert's truculent temper, although as the boy had often bitterly remarked, it had always "told agin' him."

"All right," said the master, perfectly convinced. "It must have been my fancy; but I thought somebody looked in—or passed by the window."

But here Johnny, who had overheard the dialogue and approached them, suddenly threw himself upon his brother's unoffending legs and commenced to beat and pull them about with unintelligible protests. Rupert without looking down said quietly, "Quit that now—I won't, I tell ye," and went through certain automatic movements of dislodging Johnny as if he were a mere impeding puppy.

"What's the matter, Johnny?" said the master, to whom these gyrations were not unfamiliar.

Johnny only replied by a new grip of his brother's trousers.

"Well, sir," said Rupert, slightly recovering his dimples and his readiness, "Johnny, yer, wants me to tell ye something. Ef he wasn't the most original self-cocking, God-forsaken liar in Injin Spring—ef he didn't lie awake in his crib mornin's to invent lies fer the day, I wouldn't mind tellin' ye, and would hev told you before. However, since you ask, and since you think you saw somebody around the school house, Johnny yer allows that Seth Davis is spyin' round and followin' ye wherever you go, and he dragged me down yer to see it. He says he saw him doggin' ye."

"With a knife and pithtolth," added Johnny's boundless imagination to the detriment of his limited facts.

Mr. Ford looked keenly from the one to the other, but rather with a suspicion that they were cognizant of

his late fracas than belief in the truth of Johnny's statement.

"And what do *you* think of it, Rupert?" he asked carelessly.

"I think, sir," said Rupert, "that allowin'—for onct—that Johnny ain't lying, mebbe it's Cressy McKinstry that Seth's huntin' round, and knowin' that she's always runnin' after you—" he stopped, and reddening with a newborn sense that his fatal truthfulness had led him into a glaring indelicacy towards the master, hurriedly added: "I mean, sir, that mebbe it's Uncle Ben he's jealous of, now that he's got rich enough for Cressy to hev him, and knowin' he comes to school in the afternoon perhaps—"

"Tain't either!" broke in Johnny promptly. "Theth's over ther beyond the thchool, and Crethy's eatin' the cream at the bakerth with Uncle Ben."

"Well, suppose she is, Seth don't know it, silly!" answered Rupert, sharply. Then more politely to the master: "That's it! Seth has seen Uncle Ben gallivanting with Cressy and thinks he's bringing her over yer. Don't you see?"

The master however did not see but one thing. The girl who had only two days ago carelessly left it to him to explain a compromising situation to her mother—this girl who had precipitated him into a frontier fight to the peril of his position and her good name, was calmly eating ices with an available suitor without the least concern of the past! The connection was perhaps illogical, but it was unpleasant. It was the more awkward from the fact that he fancied that not only Rupert's beautiful eyes, but even the infant Johnny's round ones were fixed upon him with an embarrassed expression of hesitating and foreboding sympathy.

"I think Johnny believes what he says—don't you, Johnny?" he smiled with an assumption of cheerful ease, "but I see no necessity just yet for binding Seth Davis over to keep the peace. Tell me about yourself, Rupe.

I hope Uncle Ben doesn't think of changing his young tutor with his good fortune!"

"No, sir," returned Rupert brightening; "he promises to take me to Sacramento with him as his private secretary or confidential clerk, you know, ef—ef—" he hesitated again with very un-Rupert-like caution, "ef things go as he wants 'em." He stopped awkwardly and his brown eyes became clouded. "Like ez not, Mr. Ford, he's only foolin' me—and—*himself*!" The boy's eyes sought the master's curiously.

"I don't know about that," returned Mr. Ford uneasily, with a certain recollection of Uncle Ben's triumph over his own incredulity, "he surely hasn't shown himself a fool or a boaster so far. I consider your prospect a very fair one, and I wish you joy of it, my boy." He ran his fingers through Rupert's curls in his old caressing fashion, the more tenderly perhaps that he fancied he still saw symptoms of storm and wet weather in the boy's brown eyes. "Run along home, both of you, and don't worry yourselves about me."

He turned away, but had scarcely proceeded half a dozen yards before he felt a tug at his coat. Looking down he saw the diminutive Johnny. "They'll be comin' home thith way," he said, reaching up in a hoarse confidential whisper.

"Who?"

"Crethy and 'im."

But before the master could make any response to this presumably gratifying information, Johnny had rejoined his brother. The two boys waved their hands towards him with the same diffident and mysterious sympathy that left him hesitating between a smile and a frown. Then he proceeded on his way. Nevertheless, for no other reason than that he felt a sudden distaste to meeting any one, when he reached the point where the trail descended directly to the settlement, he turned into a longer and more solitary detour by the woods.

The sun was already so low that its long rays pierced the forest from beneath, and suffused the dim colonnade of straight pine shafts with a golden haze, while it left the dense intercrossed branches fifty feet above in deeper shadow. Walking in this yellow twilight, with his feet noiselessly treading down the yielding carpet of pine needles, it seemed to the master that he was passing through the woods in a dream. There was no sound but the dull intermittent double knock of the wood-pecker, or the drowsy croak of some early roosting bird; all suggestion of the settlement with all traces of human contiguity were left far behind. It was therefore with a strange and nervous sense of being softly hailed by some woodland spirit that he seemed to hear his own name faintly wafted upon the air. He turned quickly; it was Cressy, panting behind him! Even then, in her white closely gathered skirts, her bared head and graceful arching neck bent forward, her flying braids freed from the straw hat which she had swung from her arm so as not to impede her flight, there was so much of the following Mænad about her that he was for an instant startled.

He stopped; she bounded to him, and throwing her arms around his neck with a light laugh, let herself hang for a moment breathless on his breast. Then recovering her speech she said slowly:

"I started on an Injin trot after you, just as you turned off the trail, but you'd got so far ahead while I was shaking myself clear of Uncle Ben that I had to jist lope the whole way through the woods to catch up." She stopped, and looking up into his troubled face caught his cheeks between her hands, and bringing his knit brows down to the level of her humid blue eyes said, "You haven't kissed me yet. What's the matter?"

"Doesn't it strike you that I might ask that question, considering that it's three days since I've seen you, and that you left me, in a rather awkward

position to explain matters to your mother?" he said coldly. He had formulated the sentence in his mind some moments before, but now that it was uttered, it appeared singularly weak and impotent.

"That's so," she said with a frank laugh, burying her face in his waist-coat. "You see, dandy boy"—his pet name—"I reckoned for that reason we'd better lie low for a day or two. Well," she continued, untying his cravat and retying it again, "how did you crawl out of it?"

"Do you mean to say your mother did not tell you?" he asked indignantly.

"Why should she?" returned Cressy lazily. "She never talks to me of these things, honey."

"And you knew nothing about it?"

Cressy shook her head, and then winding one of her long braids around the young man's neck, offered the end of it to his mouth, and on his sternly declining it, took it in her own.

Yet even her ignorance of what had really happened did not account to the master for the indifference of her long silence, and albeit conscious of some inefficiency in his present unheroic attitude, he continued sarcastically, "May I ask what you imagined would happen when you left me?"

"Well," said Cressy confidently, "I reckoned, chile, you could lie as well as the next man, and that, being gifted, you'd sling Maw something new and purty. Why, I ain't got no fancy, but I fixed up something against Paw's questioning me. I made that conceited Masters promise to swear that he was in the barn with me. Then I calculated to tell Paw that you came meandering along just before Maw popped in, and that I ske-daddled to join Masters. Of course," she added quickly, tightening her hold of the master as he made a sudden attempt at withdrawal, "I didn't let on to Masters *why* I wanted him to promise, or that you were there."

"Cressy," said Ford, irritated be-

yond measure, "are you mad, or do you think I am?"

The girl's face changed. She cast a half frightened, half questioning glance at his eyes and then around the darkening aisle. "If we're going to quarrel, Jack," she said hurriedly, "don't let's do it *before folks*."

"In the name of Heaven," he said, following her eyes indignantly, "what do you mean?"

"I mean," she said, with a slight shiver of resignation and scorn, "if you—oh dear! if it's *all* going to be like *them*, let's keep it to ourselves."

He gazed at her in hopeless bewilderment. Did she really mean that she was more frightened at the possible revelation of their disagreement than of their intimacy?

"Come," she continued tenderly, still glancing however uneasily around her, "come! We'll be more comfortable in the hollow. It's only a step." Still holding him by her braid she half led, half dragged him away. To the right was one of those sudden depressions in the ground caused by the subsidence of the earth from hidden springs and the uprooting of one or two of the larger trees. When she had forced him down this declivity below the level of the needle-strewn forest floor, she seated him upon a mossy root, and shaking out her skirts in a half childlike, half coquettish way, comfortably seated herself in his lap, with her arm supplementing the clinging braid around his neck.

"Now hark to me, and don't holler so loud," she said, turning his face to her questioning eyes. "What's gone of you anyway, nigger boy?" It should be premised that Cressy's terms of endearment were mainly negro-dialectical, reminiscences of her brief babyhood, her slave-nurse, and the only playmates she had ever known.

Still implacable, the master coldly repeated the counts of his indictment against the girl's strange indifference and still stranger entanglements, winding up by setting forth the whole story

of his interview with her mother, his enforced defence of the barn, Seth's outspoken accusation, and their silent and furious struggle in the loft. But if he had expected that this daughter of a south-western fighter would betray any enthusiasm over her lover's participation in one of their characteristic feuds—if he looked for any fond praise for his own prowess, he was bitterly mistaken. She loosened her arm from his neck of her own accord, unwound the braid, and putting her two little hands clasped between her knees, crossed her small feet before her, and, albeit still in his lap, looked the picture of languid dejection.

"Maw ought to have more sense, and you ought to have lit out through the window after me," she said with a lazy sigh. "Fightin' ain't in your line—it's too much like *them*. That Seth's sure to get even with you."

"I can protect myself," he said haughtily. Nevertheless he had a depressing consciousness that his lithe and graceful burden was somewhat in the way of any heroic expression.

"Seth can lick you out of your boots, chile," she said with naive abstraction. Then, as he struggled to secure an upright position, "Don't get riled, honey. Of course *you'd* let them kill you before *you'd* give in. But that's their best holt—that's their trade! That's all they can do—don't you see? That's where *you're* not like *them*—that's why *you're* not their low down kind! That's why you're my boy—that's why I love you!"

She had thrown her whole weight again upon his shoulders until she had forced him back to his seat. Then, with her locked hands again around his neck, she looked intently into his face. The varying colour dropped from her cheeks, her eyes seemed to grow larger, the same look of rapt absorption and possession that had so transfigured her young face at the ball was fixed upon it now. Her lips parted slightly, she seemed to murmur rather than speak :

"What are these people to us? What are Seth's jealousies, Uncle Ben's and Masters's foolishness, Paw and Maw's quarrels and tantrums to you and me, dear? What is it what *they* think, what they reckon, what they plan out, and what they set themselves against—to us? We love each other, we belong to each other, without their help or their hindrance. From the time we first saw each other it was so, and from that time Paw and Maw, and Seth and Masters, and even *you* and *me*, dear, had nothing else to do. That was love as I know it; not Seth's sneaking rages, and Uncle Ben's sneaking fooleries, and Masters's sneaking conceit, but only love. And knowing that, I let Seth rage, and Uncle Ben dawdle, and Masters trifle—and for what? To keep them from me and my boy. They were satisfied, and we were happy."

Vague and unreasoning as he knew her speech to be, the rapt and perfect conviction with which it was uttered staggered him.

"But how is this to end, Cressy?" he said passionately.

The abstracted look passed, and the slight colour and delicate mobility of her face returned. "To end, dandy boy?" she repeated lazily. "You didn't think of marrying me—did you?"

He blushed, stammered, and said "Yes," albeit with all his past vacillation and his present distrust of her, transparent on his cheek and audible in his voice.

"No, dear," she said quietly, reaching down, untying her little shoe and shaking the dust and pine needles from its recesses, "no! I don't know enough to be a wife to you, just now, and you know it. And I couldn't keep a house fit for you, and you couldn't afford to keep *me* without it. And then it would be all known, and it wouldn't be us two, dear, and our lonely meetings any more. And we couldn't be engaged—that would be too much like me and Seth over again. That's what you mean, dandy

boy—for you're only a dandy boy, you know, and they don't get married to backwood Southern girls who haven't a nigger to bless themselves with since the war! No," she continued, lifting her proud little head so promptly after Ford had recovered from his surprise as to make the ruse of emptying her shoe perfectly palpable, "no, that's what we've both allowed, dear, all along. And now, honey, it's near time for me to go. Tell me something good—before I go. Tell me that you love me as you used to—tell me how you felt that night at the ball when you first knew we loved each other. But stop—kiss me first—there, once more—for keeps."

CHAPTER XI.

WHEN Uncle Ben, or "Benjamin Daubigny, Esq." as he was already known in the columns of the "Star," accompanied Miss Cressy McKinstry on her way home after the first display of attention and hospitality since his accession to wealth and position, he remained for some moments in a state of bewildered and smiling idiocy. It was true that their meeting was chance and accidental; it was true that Cressy had accepted his attention with lazy amusement; it was true that she had suddenly and audaciously left him on the borders of the McKinstry woods in a way that might have seemed rude and abrupt to any escort less invincibly good humoured than Uncle Ben, but none of these things marred his fatuous felicity. It is even probable that in his gratuitous belief that his timid attentions had been too marked and impulsive, he attributed Cressy's flight to a maidenly coyness that pleasantly increased his admiration for her and his confidence in himself. In his abstraction of enjoyment and in the gathering darkness he ran against a fir tree very much as he had done while walking with her, and he confusedly apologized to it as he had to her, and by her own appellation. In this way he eventually overran his

trail and found himself unexpectedly in the clearing before the school-house.

"Ef this ain't the singlerest thing, miss," he said, and then stopped suddenly. A faint noise in the school-house like the sound of splintered wood attracted his attention. The master was evidently there. If he was alone he would speak to him.

He went to the window, looked in, and in an instant his amiable abstraction left him. He crept softly to the door, tried it, and then putting his powerful shoulder against the panel, forced the lock from its fastenings. He entered the room as Seth Davis, frightened but furious, lifted himself from before the master's desk which he had just broken open. He had barely time to conceal something in his pocket and close the lid again before Uncle Ben approached him.

"What mount ye be doin' here, Seth Davis?" he asked with the slow deliberation which in that locality meant mischief.

"And what mount *you* be doin' here, Mister Ben Dabney?" said Seth, resuming his effrontery.

"Well," returned Uncle Ben, planting himself in the aisle before his opponent; "I ain't doin' no sheriff's *posse* business jest now, but I reckon to keep my hand in far enuff to protect other folks' property," he added with a significant glance at the broken lock of the desk.

"Ben Dabney," said Seth in snarling expostulation, "I hain't got no quar'll with ye!"

"Then hand me over whatever you took just now from teacher's desk and we'll talk about that afterwards," said Uncle Ben advancing.

"I tell ye I hain't got no quar'll with ye, Uncle Ben," continued Seth, retreating with a malignant sneer; "and when you talk of protectin' other folks' property, mebbe ye'd better protect *your own*—or what ye'd like to call so—instead of quar'llin' with the man that's helpin' ye. I've got yer the proofs that that sneakin' hound of a Yankee school-

master that Cress McKinstry's hell bent on, and that the old man and old woman are just chuckin' into her arms, is a lyin', black-hearted, hypocritical seducer—"

"Stop!" said Uncle Ben in a voice that made the crazy casement rattle.

He strode towards Seth Davis, no longer with his habitual careful, hesitating step, but with a tread that seemed to shake the whole school-room. A single dominant clutch of his powerful right hand on the young man's breast forced him backwards into the vacant chair of the master. His usually florid face had grown as grey as the twilight; his menacing form in a moment filled the little room and darkened the windows. Then in some inexplicable reaction his figure slightly drooped, he laid one heavy hand tremblingly on the desk, and with the other affected to wipe his mouth after his old embarrassed fashion.

"What's that you were sayin' o' Cressy?" he said huskily.

"Wot everybody says," said the frightened Seth, gaining a cowardly confidence under his adversary's emotion. "Wot every cub that sets yer under his cantin' teachin', and sees 'em together, knows. It's wot you'd hev knowed ef he and Roop Filgee hadn't played ye fer a softy all the time. And while you've bin hangin' round yer fer a flicker of Cressy's gownd as she prances out o' school, he's bin lyin' low and laffin' at ye, and while he's turned Roop over to keep you here, pretendin' to give ye lessons, he's bin gallivantin' round with her and huggin' and kissin' her in barns and in the brush—and now you want to quar'll with me."

He stopped, panting for breath, and stared malignantly in the grey face of his hearer. But Uncle Ben only lifted his heavy hand mildly with an awkward gesture of warning, stepped softly in his old cautious hesitating manner to the open door, closed it, and returned gently.

"I reckon ye got in through the winder, didn't ye, Seth?" he said,

with a laboured affectation of unemotional ease, "a kind o' one leg over, and one, two, and then you're in, eh?"

"Never you mind *how* I got in, Ben Dabney," returned Seth, his hostility and insolence increasing with his opponent's evident weakness, "ez long ez I got yer and got, by G—d! what I kem here fer! For whiles all this was goin' on, and whiles the old fool man and old fool woman was swallowin' what they did see and blinkin' at what they didn't, and huggin' themselves that they'd got high-toned kempany fer their darter, that high-toned kempany was playin' *them* too, by G—d! Yes, sir! that high-toned, cantin' school-teacher was keepin' a married woman in 'Frisco, all the while he was here honey-foglin' with Cressy, and I've got the papers yer to prove it." He tapped his breast-pocket with a coarse laugh and thrust his face forward into the grey shadow of his adversary's.

"An' you sorter spotted their bein' in this yer desk and bursted it?" said Uncle Ben, gravely examining the broken lock in the darkness as if it were the most important feature of the incident.

Seth nodded. "You bet your life. I saw him through the winder only this afternoon lookin' over 'em alone, and I reckoned to lay my hands on 'em if I had to bust him or his desk. And I did!" he added with a triumphant chuckle.

"And you did—sure pop!" said Uncle Ben with slow deliberate admiration, passing his heavy hand along the splintered lid. "And you reckon, Seth, that this yer showin' of him up will break off enythin' betwixt him and this yer—this yer Miss—Miss McKinstry?" he continued with laboured formality.

"I reckon ef the old fool McKinstry don't shoot him in his tracks that'll be white men enough in Injin Springs to ride this high-toned, pizenous hypocrit on a rail outer the settlement!"

"That's so!" said Uncle Ben musingly, after a thoughtful pause, in

which he still seemed to be more occupied with the broken desk than his companion's remark. Then he went on cautiously; "And ez this thing orter be worked mighty fine, Seth, p'raps, on the hull, you'd better let me have them papers."

"What! *You?*" snarled Seth, drawing back with a glance of angry suspicion; "not if I know it!"

"Seth," said Uncle Ben, resting his elbows on the desk confidentially, and speaking with painful and heavy deliberation, "when you first interdoosed this yer subject you elluded to my hevin', so to speak, rights o' preemption and interference with this young lady, and that in your opinion I wasn't purtectin' them rights. It 'pears to me that, allowin' that to be gospel truth, them ther papers orter be in *my* possession—you hevin' so to speak no rights to purtect, bein' off the board with this yer young lady, and bein' moved gin'rally by free and independent cussedness. And ez I sed afore, this sort o' thing havin' to be worked mighty fine, and them papers mannipulated with judgment, I reckon, Seth, if you don't objeck, I'll hev—hev—to trouble you."

Seth started to his feet with a rapid glance at the door, but Uncle Ben had risen again with the same alarming expression of completely filling the darkened school-room, and of shaking the floor beneath him at the slightest movement. Already he fancied he saw Uncle Ben's powerful arm hovering above him ready to descend. It suddenly occurred to him that if he left the execution of his scheme of exposure and vengeance to Uncle Ben, the *onus* of stealing the letters would fall equally upon their possessor. This advantage seemed more probable than the danger of Uncle Ben's weakly yielding them up to the master. In the latter case he, Seth, could still circulate the report of having seen the letters which Uncle Ben had himself stolen in a fit of jealousy—a hypothesis the more readily accepted from the latter's familiar knowledge of the school-house and his presumed ambi-

tious jealousy of Cressy in his present attitude as a man of position. With affected reluctance and hesitation he put his hand to his breast-pocket.

"Of course," he said, "if you're kalkilatin' to take up the quar'll on *your* rights, and ez Cressy ain't anythin' more to me, *you* orter hev the proofs. Only don't trust them into that hound's hands. Once he gets 'em again he'll secure a warrant agin you for stealin'. That'll be his game. I'd show 'em to *her* first—don't ye see?—and I reckon ef she's old Ma'am McKinstry's darter, she'll make it lively for him."

He handed the letters to the looming figure before him. It seemed to become again a yielding mortal, and said in a hesitating voice, "P'raps you'd better make tracks outer this, Seth, and leave me yer to put things to rights and fix up that door and the desk agin to-morrow mornin'. He'd better not know it to onct, and so start a row about bein' broken into."

The proposition seemed to please Seth; he even extended his hand in the darkness. But he met only an irresponsive void. With a slight shrug of his shoulders and a grunting farewell, he felt his way to the door and disappeared. For a few moments it seemed as if Uncle Ben had also deserted the school-house, so profound and quiet was the hush that fell upon it. But as the eye became accustomed to the shadow a greyish bulk appeared to grow out of it over the master's desk and shaped itself into the broad figure of Uncle Ben. Later, when the moon rose and looked in at the window, it saw him as the master had seen him on the first day he had begun his lessons in the school-house, with his face bent forward over the desk and the same look of child-like perplexity and struggle that he had worn at his allotted task. Unheroic, ridiculous, and no doubt blundering and idiotic as then, but still vaguely persistent in his thought, he remained for some moments in this attitude. Then rising and taking advantage of the moonlight that flooded the desk

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he set himself to mend the broken lock with a large mechanical clasp-knife he produced from his pocket, and the aid of his workmanlike thumb and finger. Presently he began to whistle softly, at first a little artificially and with relapses of reflective silence. The lock of the desk restored, he secured into position again that part of the door-lock which he had burst off in his entrance. This done, he closed the door gently and once more stepped out into the moonlit clearing. In replacing his knife in his pocket he took out the letters which he had not touched since they were handed to him in the darkness. His first glance at the handwriting caused him to stop. Then still staring at it, he began to move slowly and automatically backwards to the porch. When he reached it he sat down, unfolded the letter, and without attempting to read it, turned its pages over and over with the unfamiliarity of an illiterate man in search of the signature. This when found apparently plunged him again into motionless abstraction. Only once he changed his position to pull up the legs of his trousers, open his knees, and extend the distance between his feet, and then with the unfolded pages carefully laid in the moonlit space thus opened before him, regarded them with dubious speculation. At the end of ten minutes he rose with a sigh of physical and mental relaxation, re-folded the letter, put it in his pocket, and made his way to the town.

When he reached the hotel he turned into the bar-room, and observing that it happened to be comparatively deserted, asked for a glass of whiskey. In response to the bar-keeper's glance of curiosity—as Uncle Ben seldom drank, and then only as a social function with others—he explained:

"I reckon straight whiskey is about ez good ez the next thing for blind chills."

The bar-keeper here interposed that in his larger medical experience he had found the exhibition of ginger in combination with gin attended with

effect, although it was evident that in his business capacity he regarded Uncle Ben, as a drinker, with distrust.

"Ye ain't seen Mr. Ford hanging round yer lately?" continued Uncle Ben with laborious ease.

The bar-keeper, with his eye still scornfully fixed on his customer, but his hands which were engaged in washing his glasses under the counter giving him the air of humorously communicating with a hidden confederate, had not seen the schoolmaster that afternoon.

Uncle Ben turned away and slowly mounted the staircase to the master's room. After a moment's pause on the landing, which must have been painfully obvious to any one who heard his heavy ascent, he gave two timid raps on the door which were equally ridiculous in contrast with his powerful tread. The door was opened promptly by the master.

"Oh, it's you, is it?" he said shortly. "Come in."

Uncle Ben entered without noticing the somewhat ungracious form of invitation. "It war me," he said, "dropped in, not finding ye down stairs. Let's have a drink."

The master gazed at Uncle Ben who owing to his abstraction had not yet wiped his mouth of the liquor he had imperfectly swallowed, and was in consequence more redolent of whiskey than a confirmed toper. He rang the bell for the desired refreshment with a slightly cynical smile. He was satisfied that his visitor, like many others of humble position, was succumbing to his good fortune.

"I wanted to see ye, Mr. Ford," he began, taking an unproffered chair and depositing his hat after some hesitation outside the door, "in regard to what I onct told ye about my wife in Mizzouri. P'raps you disremember?"

"I remember," returned the master resignedly.

"You know it was that arternoon that fool Stacey sent the sheriff and the Harrisons over to McKinstry's barn."

"Go on!" petulantly said the master, who had his own reasons for not caring to recall it.

"It was that arternoon, you know, that you hadn't time to hark to me—hevin' to go off on an engagement," continued Uncle Ben with protracted deliberation, "and—"

"Yes, yes, I remember," interrupted the master exasperatedly, "and really unless you get on faster, I'll have to leave you again."

"It was that arternoon," said Uncle Ben without heeding him, "when I told you I hadn't any idea what had become o' my wife ez I left in Mizzouri."

"Yes," said the master sharply, "and I told you it was your bounden duty to look for her."

"That's so," said Uncle Ben nodding comfortably, "them's your very words; on'y a leetle more strong than that, ef I don't disremember. Well, I reckon I've got an idee!"

The master assumed a sudden expression of interest, but Uncle Ben did not vary his monotonous tone.

"I kem across that idee, so to speak, on the trail. I kem across it in some letters ez was lying wide open in the brush. I picked 'em up and I've got 'em here."

He slowly took the letters from his pocket with one hand, while he dragged the chair on which he was sitting beside the master. But with a quick flash of indignation Mr. Ford rose and extended his hand.

"These are *my* letters, Dabney," he said sternly, "stolen from my desk. Who has dared to do this?"

But Uncle Ben had, as if accidentally, interposed his elbow between the master and Seth's spoils.

"Then it's all right?" he returned deliberately. "I brought 'em here because I thought they might give an idee where my wife was. For them letters is in her own handwrit. You remember ez I told ez how she was a scollard."

The master sat back in his chair white and dumb. Incredible, extraordinary and utterly unlooked for as

was this revelation, he felt instinctively that it was true.

"I couldn't read it myself—ez you know. I didn't keer to ax any one else to read it for me—you kin reckon why, too. And that's why I'm troublin' you to-night, Mr. Ford—ez a friend."

The master with a desperate effort recovered his voice. "It is impossible. The lady who wrote those letters does not bear your name. More than that," he added with hasty irrelevance, "she is so free that she is about to be married, as you might have read. You have made a mistake; the handwriting may be like, but it cannot be really your wife's."

Uncle Ben shook his head slowly. "It's her'n—there's no mistake. When a man, Mr. Ford, hez studied that handwrite—hevin', so to speak, knewed it on'y from the *outside*—from seein' it passin' like between friends—that man's chances o' bein' mistook ain't ez great ez the man's who on'y takes in the sense of the words that might b'long to everybody. And her name not bein' the same ez mine, don't foller. Ef she got a divorce she'd take her old gal's name—the name of her famerly. And that would seem to allow she *did* get a divorce. What mowt she hev called herself when she writ this?"

The master saw his opportunity and rose to it with a chivalrous indignation, that for the moment imposed even upon himself. "I decline to answer that question," he said angrily. "I refuse to allow the name of any woman who honours me with her confidence to be dragged into the infamous outrage that has been committed upon me and common decency. And I shall hold the thief and scoundrel—whoever he may be—answerable to myself in the absence of her natural protector."

Uncle Ben surveyed the hero of these glittering generalities with undisguised admiration. He extended his hand to him gravely.

"Shake! Ef another proof was wantin', Mr. Ford, of that bein' my wife's letter," he said, "that high-toned style of yours would settle it.

For ef that was one thing she *did* like, it was that sort of po'try. And one reason why her and me didn't get on, and why I skedaddled, was because it wasn't in my line. Et's all in trainin'! On'y a man ez had the Fourth Reader at his fingers' ends could talk like that. Bein' brought up on Dobell—ez is nowhere—it sorter lets me outer you, ez it did outer *her*. But allowin' it ain't the square thing for *you* to mention her name, that wouldn't be nothin' agin' my doin' it, and callin' her, well—Lou Price, in a keerless sort o' way, eh?"

"I decline to answer further," replied the master quickly, although his colour had changed at the name. "I decline to say another word on the matter until this mystery is cleared up—until I know who dared to break into my desk and steal my property, and the purpose of this unheard-of outrage. And I demand possession of those letters at once."

Uncle Ben without a word put them in the master's hand, to his slight surprise, and it must be added to his faint discomfiture, nor was it decreased when Uncle Ben added with grave *naïveté* and a patronising pressure of his hand on his shoulder—"In course ez you're taken' it on to yourself, and ez Lou Price aint got no further call on *me*, they orter be yours. Ez to who got 'em outer the desk, I reckon you ain't got no suspicion of any one spyin' round ye—hev ye?"

In an instant the recollection of Seth Davis's face at the window and the corroboration of Rupert's warning flashed across Ford's mind. The hypothesis that Seth had imagined that they were Cressy's letters, and had thrown them down without reading them when he had found out his mistake, seemed natural. For if he had read them he would undoubtedly have kept them to show to Cressy. The complex emotions that had disturbed the master on the discovery of Uncle Ben's relationship to the writer of the letters were resolving themselves into a furious rage at Seth. But before he dared revenge himself he must be first assured that Seth was ignorant of

their contents. He turned to Uncle Ben.

"I have a suspicion, but to make it certain I must ask you for the present to say nothing of this to any one."

Uncle Ben nodded. "And when you hev found out and you're settled in your mind that you kin make *my* mind easy about this yer Lou Price, ez we'll call her, bein' divorced squarely, and bein', so to speak, in the way o' getting married agin, ye might let me know—ez a friend. I reckon I won't trouble you any more to-night—unless you and me takes another sociable drink together in the bar. No? Well, then, good-night." He moved slowly towards the door. With his hand on the lock he added: "Ef yer writin' to her agin, you might say ez how you found *me* lookin' well and comf'able, and hopin' she's enjyin' the same blessin'. 'So long."

He disappeared, leaving the master in a hopeless collapse of conflicting, and it is to be feared, not very heroic emotions. The situation which had begun so dramatically had become suddenly unromantically ludicrous, without however losing any of its embarrassing quality. He was conscious that he occupied the singular position of being more ridiculous than the husband—whose invincible and complacent simplicity stung him like the most exquisite irony. For an instant he was almost goaded into the fury of declaring that he had broken off from the writer of the letters for ever, but its inconsistency with the chivalrous attitude he had just taken occurred to him in time to prevent him from becoming doubly absurd. His rage with Seth Davis seemed to him the only feeling left that was genuine and rational, and yet now that Uncle Ben had gone even that had a spurious ring. It was necessary for him to lash himself into a fury over the hypothesis that the letters *might* have been Cressy's, and desecrated by that scoundrel's touch. Perhaps he had read them and left them to be picked up by

others. He looked over them carefully to see if their meaning would to the ordinary reader appear obvious and compromising. His eye fell on the first paragraph.

"I should not be quite fair with you, Jack, if I affected to disbelieve in your faith in your love for me and its endurance, but I should be still more unfair if I didn't tell you what I honestly believe, that at your age you are apt to deceive yourself, and without knowing it to deceive others. You confess you have not yet decided upon your career, and you are always looking forward so hopefully, dear Jack, for a change in the future, but you are willing to believe that far more serious things than that will suffer no change in the meantime. If we continued as we were, I who am older than you and have more experience might learn the misery of seeing you change towards *me* as I have changed towards another, and for the same reason. If I were sure I could keep pace with you in your dreams and your ambition, if I were sure that I always knew *what* they were, we might still be happy—but I am not sure, and I dare not again risk my happiness on an uncertainty. In coming to my present resolution I do not look for happiness, but at least I know I shall not suffer disappointment, nor involve others in it. I confess I am growing too old not to feel the value to a woman—necessity to her in this country—of security in her present and future position. Another can give me that. And although you may call this a selfish view of our relations, I believe that you will soon—if you do not, even as you read this now—feel the justice of it, and thank me for taking it."

With a smile of scorn he tore up the letter, in what he fondly believed was the bitterness of an outraged trustful nature, forgetting that for many weeks he had scarcely thought of its writer, and that he himself in his conduct had already anticipated its truths.

(To be continued.)

GRAY.

EVERY boy who leaves Eton creditably is presented with a copy of the works of Gray, for which everything has been done that the art of printers, bookbinders and photographers can devise. This is one of the most curious instances of the triumphs of genius, for there is hardly a single figure in the gallery of Etonians who is so little characteristic of Eton as Gray. His only poetical utterance about his school is one which is hopelessly alien to the spirit of the place, though the feelings expressed in it are an exquisite summary of those sensations of pathetic interest which any rational man feels at the sight of a great school. And yet, though the attitude of the teacher of youth is professedly and rightly rather that of encouragement than of warning, though he points to the brighter hopes of life rather than brandishes the horrors that infest it, yet the last word that Eton says to her sons is spoken in the language of one to whom elegy was a habitual and deliberate tone.

Gray's was in many ways a melancholy life. His vitality was low, and such happiness as he enjoyed was of a languid kind. Physically and emotionally he was unfit to cope with realities, and this though he never felt the touch of some of the most crushing evils that humanity sustains. He was never poor, he was never despised, he had many devoted friends; but on the other hand he had a wretched and diseased constitution, he suffered from all sorts of prostrating complaints, from imaginary insolences, violent antipathies, and want of sympathy. Fame such as is rarely accorded to men came to him: he was accepted as without doubt the first of living English poets; and he took no kind of pleasure in it. He was horrified to find himself a celebrity; he refused to

be Poet Laureate; he refused honorary degrees; when at Cambridge the young scholars are said to have left their dinners to see him as he passed in the street, it was a sincere pain to him. Cowper counterbalanced his fits of unutterable melancholy by his hours of tranquil serenity over teacups and muffins and warm coal-fires, with the curtains drawn close. Johnson enlivened his boding depression by tyrannizing over an adoring circle. But Gray's only compensations were his friends. Any one who knows Gray's letters to and about his young friend Bonstetten, knows how close and warm it is possible for friendship to be.

No biography is more simple than Gray's. From Eton he passed to Cambridge, which was practically his home for the rest of his life. He went as a young man on a long foreign tour of nearly three years with Horace Walpole, quarrelled, and came back alone, both claiming to have been in the wrong; he travelled in England and Scotland a little; he lived a little in London and a good deal at Stoke Pogis, where he kept a perfect menagerie of aged aunts, and he died somewhat prematurely at the age of fifty. He spent in all more than twenty years at Cambridge—the only event that interrupted his life there being his move from Peterhouse to Pembroke, across the road, in consequence of an offensive practical joke played on him by some undergraduates, who, working on his morbid dread of fire, induced him by their cries to leave the window of his room by means of a rope ladder, and descend into a tub of water placed ready for this purpose. The authorities at Peterhouse seem to have made no sort of attempt to punish this wanton outrage, or to have been anxious to keep him at their college.

So he lived on at Cambridge, hating

the "silly dirty place", as he calls it. The atmosphere, physical and mental, weighed on his spirits with leaden dulness. In one of his early letters he speaks of it as the land indicated by the prophet, where the ruined houses were full of owls and doleful creatures. He often could not bring himself to go there, and once there, his spirits sank so low that he could not prevail on himself to move. Almost the only part he took in the public life of the place was to write and circulate squibs and lampoons on people and local politics, most of which have fortunately perished; those that remain are coarse and vindictive. Nevertheless he had some true friends there: Mason, his worshipper and biographer, Dr. Brown, the master of Pembroke, in whose arms he died, and several others. He held no office there and did no work for the place, till late in his life the Professorship of Modern History, a mere sinecure, came to him unsolicited. It was his aim throughout to be considered a gentleman who read for his own amusement, and with that curious fastidiousness which was so characteristic of him, he considered it beneath him to receive money for his writings, the copyrights of which he bestowed upon his publisher. Forty pounds for a late edition of his poems is said to be the only money of this kind that he ever handled. But he was, as has been said, well off, at least in his later years. He had a country house at Wanstead which he let, a house in Cornhill, property at Stoke, and, though he sunk some money in a large annuity, he died worth several thousand pounds.

It might be thought that such a life, meagre and solitary as it was, would furnish few details to a biographer, and this is to a certain extent true; but about Gray there is a peculiar atmosphere of attractiveness. He went his own way, thought his own thoughts, and did not concern himself in the least with the ordinary life of people round about him, except

to despise them. This disdainful attitude is always an attractive one. The recluse stimulates curiosity; and when we pass behind the scenes and see the high purity of the life, the wide and deep ideals always floating before such a man, the wonder grows. He lived unconsciously at so high a level that he could not conceive how low and animal lives were possible to men: he owned to no physical impulses; he held that there was no knowledge unworthy of the philosopher, except theology; and over the whole of his existence hung that shadow of doom which lends a pathetic interest to the lives of the meanest of mankind.

When such a man is the author of the most famous poem of pure sentiment in the English language, as well as of smaller pieces by which some readers are fascinated, most impressed, and all of which have enriched the world with one or more eternal phrases, our interest is indefinitely increased, because isolation only ceases to be interesting when it is self-absorbed and self-centred. Gray, on the other hand, suppressed himself so effectually in his writings that he even caused them for some readers to forfeit that personal interest that is so attractive to most. "We are all condemned," he says, "to lonely grief,"— "the tender for another's pain, the unfeeling for his own"; one of the latter could never have written these words.

The deeper that we enter into such a life, the more fascinating it becomes. All his tastes were so natural and yet so high; whatever he sets his hand to ceases to be dull; he had a transfiguring touch; he was moreover such a strange unconscious precursor of modern tastes and fancies, in such things as his self-created taste for architecture and antiquities, which by communicating them to Horace Walpole (for Gray's influence can be surely traced in Horace's artistic development) he succeeded in making fashionable; his dignified preferences in art,

his rapturous devotion to music, especially to Pergolesi and the contemporary Roman School, whose airs he would sit crooning to himself, playing his own accompaniment on the harpsichord in the high unvisited rooms at Pembroke; his penchant for heraldry, his educational theories, his minute and accurate investigations of Nature, as close and loving as Gilbert White's, recording as he does the break of dry clear weather into warm wet winds, the first flight of ladybirds, the first push of crocuses, the first time he heard the redstart's note in the bushes and the thrush flitting about the butts of the old college-gardens, "scattering", as he said in a lovely impromptu line that he made in a walk near Cambridge, "her loose notes in the waste of air." In 1740 he wrote from Florence to a friend :

"To me there hardly appears any medium between a public life and a private one; he who prefers the first must feel himself in a way of being serviceable to the rest of mankind, if he has a mind to be of any consequence among them. Nay, he must not refuse being in a certain degree dependent upon some men who are so already; if he has the good fortune to light on such as will make no ill use of his humility, there is no shame in this. If not, his ambition ought to give place to a reasonable pride, and he should apply to the cultivation of his own mind those abilities which he has not been permitted to use for others' service; such a private happiness (supposing a small competence of fortune) is almost in every one's power, and is the proper enjoyment of age, as the other is the proper employment of youth."

And this was the programme to which Gray settled down. In what vast schemes of study he indulged we do not know; but we do know that he gave five years to a comprehensive survey of Greek literature, taking prose and verse alternately, like bread and cheese; he contemplated and wrote notes for an edition of Strabo; he translated many Greek epigrams into Latin verse, curiously weighing his words for weeks together; he read history exhaustively, with such tenacious accuracy that he could correct in the margin with the everlasting pencil dates and names in a Chinese

dynasty—"a dismal waste of energy and power", sigh his biographers. No, it was no waste, for this was Gray. He wrote no poetry, except a few "autumnal verses" still unidentified. He could not write any. Mr. Matthew Arnold, in his delicate essay, blames the age for this; he puts Gray's reticence down to a want of literary sympathy and intellectual stimulus. Had Gray been born with Milton or with Burns, he says, he would have been a different man. We may thankfully doubt it. Gray's nature, Gray's powers of production, would have been far more liable to be crushed into extinction by the consciousness of the existence of a superior artist, fluent and sublime. He would have read and wondered, and thrown aside his pen. The fact that he could strike out better verse and nobler thoughts than his contemporaries, though it did not urge him to prolific production, made him at least not ashamed of work that gained by comparison with the work of all living artists; but a genius on the scene would have elbowed Gray out altogether. To take the very first instance that comes to hand of his fastidious discontent, consider the two exquisite stanzas which he struck out of the Elegy for no more adequate reason than that "they made too long a parenthesis".

" There scattered oft, the earliest of the year,
By hands unseen, are showers of violets
found;
The redbreast loves to build and warble there,
And little footsteps lightly print the
ground.

" Him have we seen the green-wood side along,
While o'er the heath we hied, our labours
done,
Oft as the woodlark piped her farewell song,
With wistful eyes pursue the setting sun."

Akenside or Mason, Dyer or Armstrong, if they had lit upon any one of these delightful lines, would have made a whole poem in which to set it, and have been well content.

Perhaps his own words best describe the intrinsic characteristics of his writings: "Thoughts that breathe and

words that burn". Gray's thoughts, the elegiac poet's thoughts, are common property, after all; every one has felt them, or something like them; the poet has got, so to speak, to make a formula which shall cover all the vague, blind variations of which every one is conscious. When he has thus made thought live, expression comes next, and here Gray surpasses almost every English poet. The words literally eat their way into memory and imagination; the epithets seize upon the nouns and crown them. Take such a stanza as the one to which Dr. Johnson gave a grudging admiration:

" For who to dumb forgetfulness a prey,
This pleasing anxious being e'er resigned,
Left the warm precincts of the cheerful day,
Nor cast one longing lingering look
behind?"

Try the effect of substitution or suppression on a stanza like that! Nothing can be spared; the gap if created could not be filled. A good instance of this is in a little poem of Gray's, written on a sheet of paper from which the lower right-hand corner has been unfortunately torn, thus depriving the last three lines of the last stanza of their last words. Both Mason and Mitford tried their hands at restoring the text. Mason's is the best, but they are both hopelessly far away. The lines run thus, Mitford's emendations being given above Mason's.

"Enough to me if to some feeling breast
convex,
My lines a secret sympathy impart,
is express
And as the pleasing influence flows contest
dies away.
A sigh of soft reflection heaves the heart."

The only thing of which we feel certain is that neither is near the truth.

It is not only in his poetry that this sure touch is visible. I do not know any more simple or yet more worthy epitaph than the one that he wrote for his mother. "In the same pious confidence, beside her friend and sister, sleep the remains of Dorothy Gray, widow, the careful tender mother of

many children, one of whom alone had the misfortune to survive her." Given the circumstances and, so to speak, the sense, how many people could have produced such an ideal of tender dignity?

It is not within the scope of this paper to make large quotations, but page after page of Gray's letters illustrate this felicitous and apposite handling. In Horace Walpole's quaint dictio: "His letters are the best I ever saw, and had more novelty and wit." But besides the perfection of style they have a charming meditative tone, combined with a certain subtle humour running through them which is hardly English. Moreover, Gray wielded to the full the power of allusion. Out of his teeming mind, echoes and memories, images and unsuspected likenesses streamed, encircling all that he thought or wrote. The perfection of classical culture, the departure of which we cannot help deplored, even though it may have been succeeded by a wider and freer sentiment, is seen in him; not only are his quotations exquisite, but there are a forgotten music which haunts his sentences and words, even in the very nicknames with which it was his delight to dub his friends.

I venture to quote the exquisite description of Burnham Beeches, which cannot be too well-known.

"I have at the distance of half a mile through a green lane, a forest (the vulgar call it a common) all my own, at least as good as so, for I spy no human thing in it but myself. It is a little chaos of mountains and precipices, mountains it is true that do not ascend much above the clouds, nor are the declivities quite so amazing as Dover Cliff, but just such hills as people who love their necks as well as I do may venture to climb, and crags that give the eye as much pleasure as if they were more dangerous. Both vale and hill are covered with most venerable beeches and other very reverend vegetables, that like most other ancient people are always *dreaming out their old stories to the winds.* At the foot of one of these squats ME (Il Pensero), and there I grow to the trunk for a whole morning. The timorous hare and sportive squirrel gambol around me like Adam in Paradise before he had an Eve, but I think he did not use to read Virgil as I commonly do."

In this letter emerges that fact which at least no one disputes, that Gray discovered and introduced the taste for natural scenery. He was nearly the first to love the hills and woods for themselves. He found out Wordsworth's favourite prospects in the lakes when Wordsworth was a dumb baby ; he gazed upon Scotland and the Alps with a reverent awe. It was a time when writers about Nature's loveliness were accustomed to describe her with their back to the study-window, and the only Nature that such men as Shenstone and Bowles revelled in was Nature as they had themselves adapted her. Gray was the first to take her as he found her.

To any one who is familiar with it, the quiet Buckinghamshire country where Gray lived comes to have a peculiar charm. Lower down, nearer the Thames, the land is oppressively flat, but Burnham and Stoke are on higher ground, broken into innumerable little undulations, with copes in the hollows, and little lanes meandering about for no apparent purpose except their own pleasure. It is a gravel soil, and immemorial excavations which indent the surfaces of all the hills and fields give a pleasant character to the whole. The wayfarer is for ever looking down into pits full nearly to the brim of ferns and brambles, elder plants and young ash-suckers ; the great bare sweeps of the fields, with the rounded gravel lying thick among the thin vegetation, are broken by little hollows full of ragwort and the brisk hardy bugloss and a dozen other light-soil plants. Of Burnham Beeches itself it is unnecessary to speak. The old wreathed trunks full of gaping mouths and eyes, standing in the green twilight knee-deep in ferns, have a character that no other trees wear, and the breaks of moorland scenery, heathery sweeps dotted with tall fir spinnies, out of which the owls call on summer nights, —all this is true forest, and needs no praise ; but the roads and lanes themselves, with the venerable hump-

backed Buckinghamshire cottages, with houseleek and stonecrop on the roof, the moated farms, the parks set with noble cedars, the high-shouldered barns, all these are full of delight. The pedestrian may climb the long slope to Burnham and gaze up its straggling red-brick street, with the quaint cupola of the church (just about to give way before the whirlwind of restoration) topping the red-tiled roofs ; he may pass on to Britwell, a house, half-grange, half-farm, with a high modern tower, where Gray used to live with his gouty uncle, a Nimrod *emeritus*, who, too broken to ride out, used to regale himself upon the "comfortable sound and stink" of his hounds by filling the house with them. The elm-girt paddocks and the tall plane-trees must be much as they were then. By Nut Hall, with its close of ancient walnuts, he may pass through East Burnham village, and finally descend upon Stoke itself by West-end House, still nestling in trees, where Gray was petted and coddled by his old aunts till he was too lazy even to go down to Eton, which lay full in view from the brow that spread half a mile below him. The tall chimneys of the manor, the hideous white dome of the park, the church ivy-girt and irregular, the churchyard surrounded by old brick walls on three sides, over which tower the sombre foliage of yews and cedars —all these he may see. The only memorial of Gray, save a tablet, is the one thing which he himself would have loathed. On a rising ground stands a huge cube of stone with marble panels, crowned with a dismal sarcophagus of the kind that suggests a hopeless prisoner for ever trying to force up the lid. This was the best that they could do for Gray ! The only other task that has been undertaken in his honour, is the hopeless and irremediable vulgarizing of the quaint and quiet college which he loved so well.

Shelley's letters are said by some to be the best ever written, but I cannot

think that they come near to Gray's. With that independence so characteristic of him, Gray is perhaps the only writer of the time who entirely escapes the Johnsonian contagion. Johnson's style, as written by Johnson himself, has indeed most of the elements of magnificence; unfortunately it is also very useful for concealing the absence of ideas. Gray's English, on the other hand, is pure and stately, and never diffuse; he said what he had to say and was done with it; he never appears to be endeavouring to "get in diction," as so many of the imitators of the Doctor undeniably did. In this respect it resembles Johnson's conversation, and for the art of statement it is hardly possible to say more.

Some slight affectation is traceable in the earliest letters. They are mostly written to his young and brilliant friend, West, by whose premature death literature, we may believe, was a loser. "Take my word and experience upon it," he writes, for example, "doing nothing is a most amusing business, and yet neither something nor nothing give me any pleasure. For this little while past I have been playing at Statius. We yesterday had a game of quoits together. You will easily forgive me for having broke his head, as you have a little pique with him." He means to say that he has been translating him. West replies in the same strain. "I agree with you that you have broke Statius' head, but it is in like manner as Apollo broke Hyacinth's—you have foiled him infinitely at his own weapons."

This is sad posturing, and only excusable in very young and clever men. These letters are, however, fortunately relieved by a short note, in which he is very humanly rude to his tutor.

As a specimen of the early style at its best, I may quote the following, written from Rome in imitation of a classical epistle:

"I am to-day just returned from Alba, a good deal fatigued, for you know the Appian is somewhat tiresome. We dined at Pompey's;

he indeed was gone for a few days to his Tuscan, but by the care of his *villicus* we made an admirable meal. We had the dugs of a pregnant sow, a peacock, a dish of thrushes, a noble scarus just fresh from the Tyrrhene, and some *conchyliae* of the lake with garum sauce. For my part I never eat better at Lucullus' table. We drank half-a-dozen *cyathii* apiece of ancient Alban to Pholoe's health, and after bathing and playing an hour at ball, we mounted our *essendum* again, and proceeded up the mount to the temple. The priests there entertained us with an account of a wonderful shower of birds' eggs that had fallen two days before, which had no sooner touched the ground but they were converted into gudgeons; as also that the night past a dreadful voice had been heard out of the *Adytum*, which spoke Greek during a full half hour, but nobody understood it."

That is nothing short of admirable; it catches the subtle classical flavour, and intermingles it with the later humour of which the Roman mind seemed so singularly destitute.

Among these earlier letters, however, there are charming passages in his natural manner. What could be better than this humorous description of Peterhouse and his life there?

"My motions at present (which you are pleased to ask after) are much like those of a pendulum or oscillatory. I swing from Chapel or Hall home, and from home to Chapel or Hall. All the strange incidents that happen in my journeys and returns I shall be sure to acquaint you with. The most wonderful is that it now rains exceedingly; this has refreshed the prospect, as the way for the most part lies between green fields on either hand terminated with buildings at some distance—castles I presume, and of great antiquity. The roads are very good, being as I presume the work of Julius Caesar's army, for they still preserve in many places the appearance of a pavement in pretty good repair, and if they were not so near home, might perhaps be as much admired as the *Via Appia*. There are at present several rivulets to be crossed, and which serve to enliven the view all around; the country is exceeding fruitful in ravens and such black cattle; but not to trouble you with my travels I abruptly conclude."

But perhaps the most striking characteristic throughout the whole series are the extraordinarily felicitous criticisms, and the soundness of the taste which he brought to bear on an author. It is true he made mistakes; he spoke of Collins as a writer that

deserved to live, but that would not ; and he, like many other clever men, was carried off his feet by the rage for Ossian. Like other critics he was misled by the accounts of interviews with Macpherson, who appeared to be a dull unintelligent person, incapable of originating or of putting together even such a composition as *Fingal* ; besides, the difficulty of getting solid testimony on the subject seems to have been extreme. Gray's last word on the subject is : " For me, I admire nothing but *Fingal*, yet I remain still in doubt about the authenticity of these poems, though inclining to believe them genuine in spite of the world. Whether they are the inventions of antiquity, or of a modern Scotchman, either case is to me alike unaccountable. *Je m'y perds.*" We, nowadays, with all the barbarous treasures of Indian and Scandinavian literatures about us, find it hard to understand how fascinating the opening of such a mine must have been, even when the ore extracted was such thin stuff as Ossian ; the old rude primitive world, as simple as Homer, fighting and singing in desolate Northern forests, seems to have been altogether too much even for the discrimination of Gray ; his imagination was taken captive ; he dreamed of little else ; we have several disappointing attempts of his own of this nature, and of Ossian, or rather Macpherson, he writes : " This man in short is the very Daemon of poetry, or he has lighted on a treasure hid for ages." We may forgive him for having floundered here. Dr. Johnson, whose imagination was not so strong as his common-sense, was the only man not misled.

But Gray on Aristotle, Gray on Froissart is admirable ; his pungent criticism on Shaftesbury, too long to quote, is a perfect masterpiece ; even his verbal criticisms on the poor stuff with which Mason inundated him, are wonderfully patient and acute. It may be worth while to hear

Gray on other people's elegies. He writes to Mason : " All I can say is, that your elegy must not end with the worst line in it ; it is flat, it is prose, whereas that above all ought to sparkle, or at least to shine. If the sentiment must stand, twist it a little into an apophthegm, stick a flower into it, gild it with a costly expression, let it strike the fancy, the ear or the heart, and I am satisfied." Again he writes, on the nature of elegiac writing : " Nature and sorrow and tenderness are the true genius of such things ; poetical ornaments are foreign to the purpose, for they only show that a man is not sorry—and devotion worse, for that teaches him that he ought not to be sorry, which is all the pleasure of the thing."

Yet he could condescend to a little good-natured puffing of his friend's writings. He sends Mason's tragedy, " *Caractacus*," a tiresome work, to a friend. " You will receive to-morrow ' *Caractacus*' piping hot, I hope before any one else has it. Observe it is I that send it, for Mason makes no presents to any one whatever ; and moreover you are desired to lend it to nobody, that we may sell the more of them,—for money, not fame, is the declared purpose of all we do. He has had infinite fits of affection as the hour approached, and is now gone into the country for a week, like a new-married couple."

He mistrusts his powers as a critic : " You know I do not love, much less pique myself on criticism, and think even a bad verse as good a thing or better than the best observation that was ever made upon it." Indeed his diffidence with regard to his own work was profound. This is the first announcement of the completion of the Elegy : " I have been here at Stoke a few days, and having put an end to a thing, whose beginning you have seen long ago, I immediately send it to you. You will, I hope, look upon it in the light of a thing with an end to it, a merit that most of my writings have wanted, and are like to want."

The following contains a pathetic touch ; the diffident man's silent hankering after recognition : "I cannot brag of my spirits, my situation, my employments, or my fertility ; the days and the nights pass, and I am never the nearer to anything but that one to which we are all tending. Yet I love people that leave some traces of their journey behind them, and have strength enough to advise you to do so while you can ; winter is the season of harvest to an author."

This is his own account of his powers of composition : "I by no means pretend to inspiration, but yet I affirm that the faculty in question [of composition] is by no means voluntary. It is the result (I suppose) of a certain disposition of mind, which does not depend on one's self, and which I have not felt this long time. You that are a witness how seldom this spirit has moved me in my life, may easily give credit to what I say." The great Doctor, whose favourite maxim it was that any one can write at any time who sets himself "doggedly" to it, was profoundly irritated by this. He speaks of Gray's "fantastic" notion that he could not write except at happy moments ; a "foppery", he adds, "to which my kindness for a man of learning makes me wish that he had been superior."

Gray was a master of the art of delicate moralizing. I cannot help wondering that more literary aphorisms have not been extracted from his writings. Here is one for example : "I am persuaded that the whole matter is to have always something going forward." And again : "You mistake me, I was always a friend to employment and no foe to money ; but they are no friends to each other. Promise me to be always busy, and I will allow you to be rich." Or more solemnly still :

"A life spent out of the world has its hours of despondence, its inconveniences, its sufferings as numerous and real (though not quite of the same sort) as a life spent in the midst of it. The power we have, when we will exert it, over our own minds, joined to a little

strength and consolation, nay, a little pride we catch from those that seem to love us, is our only support in either of these conditions. I am sensible I cannot return to you so much of this assistance as I have received from you. I can only tell you that one who has far more reason than you I hope will ever have to look on life with something worse than indifference, is yet no enemy to it, and can look backward on many bitter moments, partly with satisfaction, and partly with patience, and forward too, on a scene not very promising, with some hope and some expectations of a better day."

The last extract is particularly characteristic, and strikes a note which sounds again and again throughout the letters. Gray was so serious. Seriousness unrelieved by humour is tiresome ; but Gray, however melancholy he felt, could always retire a few paces and view himself as a spectator, with a smile. It is the truth that we do not really love a man unless we are sure that he is serious ; he may amuse us and fascinate us, but he does nothing more. And Gray was never cynical ; below his humour and contempt lay a deep regard for the holiness of life, for friendship and loyalty and old-fashioned virtues. Shelley attracts us, but we do not feel sure of him : our respect for Gray grows with every page we turn.

Of his humour it is difficult to give specimens. Isolated from the connection in which they occur they lose half their charm ; there is a habitual tone, a point of view, of which extracts can give no idea. But it may perhaps be worth while to give a sentence or two to illustrate his habit of viewing himself. On settling in London he writes : "I am just settled in my new habitation in Southampton Row ; and though a solitary and dispirited creature, not ungenial nor wholly unpleasant to myself. I live in the Museum and write volumes of antiquity." That was the sort of life that suited him. Nothing tires him he declares, more than being entertained. "I am come to my resting place, and find it very necessary, after living for a month in a house with three women, that laughed from morning to night, and would allow nothing to

the sulkiness of my disposition. Company and cards at home, parties by land and water abroad, and (what they call) *doing something*, that is, racketing about from morning to night, are occupations I find that wear out my spirits, especially in a situation where one might sit still and be alone with pleasure; for the place was a hill like Clifden, opening to a very extensive and diversified landscape, with the Thames, which is navigable, running at its foot."

He does not indulge much in anecdote, nor indeed in witticisms of a direct kind, but when he met with a story that pleased him, he sent it on. The following seems to have taken his fancy as it occurs more than once; —and it may be noted in passing that Gray was never averse to reproducing a letter almost verbally for the benefit of two or three friends: there are several instances of these duplicate letters. "An old Alderman I knew, who after living forty years on the fat of the land (not milk and honey, but arrack-punch and venison) and losing his great toe with a mortification, said to the last that he owed it to two grapes which he ate one day after dinner. He felt them lie cold at his stomach the minute they were down." Again, when he was told that a certain Dr. Plumptre, a plethoric pluralist, had had his picture painted by Wilson with his family motto below, *Non magna loquimur sed vivimus*—Gray humorously suggests a rendering: "We don't say much, but we hold good livings."

Apart from actual letters, his diaries are always delightful reading; and there is a peculiar freshness about them, because the taste for natural scenery was not then universal. It was impossible that there should be any cant about it then; any one who delighted in it was peculiar in his tastes; and Gray, who practically visited all the English districts where Nature shows herself on a morestriking scale, met with little sympathy from his friends who were writing about

her with their back to the window. It is impossible to illustrate this by quotation; but I may perhaps be excused for giving a well-known sentence, into which is concentrated a wealth of sympathetic observation; it suggests lonely evenings, when the winds were blustering round the little college-court or moaning in the tall chimneys of Stoke; for after all it is an indoor-criticism. "Did you never observe (while rocking winds are piping loud) that pause, as the gust is recollecting itself, and rising upon the ear in a shrill and plaintive note, like the swell of an *Æolian harp*? I do assure you there is nothing in the world so like the voice of a spirit."

It was not of course likely that Gray's letters would ever attain a very wide popularity; to appreciate them, they require a rather minute study of a very peculiar character, and a certain familiarity with the leisurely movements of a very uneventful life. And they are moreover touched throughout with a stately refinement, a certain delicacy and remoteness which need almost an initiation to comprehend. In days when stories like "The Mystery of a Hansom Cab" run in a few weeks into a circulation of thousands, it is only to be wondered at that such things as these letters get readers at all; for they are high literature, not spiced for a jaded taste, but somewhat austere and solemn—the intimate thoughts of a high-minded man.

Much has been said that is wide of the mark about Grey's religious belief. The fact was that he was a pagan of the grand type. He was not really a Christian, but he had no wish to tilt against orthodoxies and accepted dogmas. The most that can be traced in his writings is a solemn Theism. He recognized the huge inscrutable fate that lay behind the inexplicable fabric of human life and human history, but of the God with men, of the Divine hopes, the consecration of life, the self-abnegation of the Christian, he had no real cognizance. This, I think, cannot

be doubted. His contemptuous hatred of theology and of creeds is marked ; he had no patience with them ; of worship he knew nothing. It has been said that he would have found a medicine for his unhappiness in wedded love ; he would have found more than a medicine in religion.

The stately pathos of such a life is indisputable. The pale little poet, with greatness written so largely on all his works, with keen, deep eyes, the long aquiline nose, the heavy chin, the thin compressed lips, the halting affected gait, is a figure to be contemplated with serious and loving interest, spoiled for life, as he said, by retirement. How he panted for

strength and serenity ! How far he was from reaching either ! Yet the bitter dignity of his thought, the diffident and fastidious will, are of a finer type than we often meet with. We cannot spare the men of action it is true ; yet the contemplative soul, with the body so pitifully unequal to sustain its agonizing struggle, is an earnest of higher things. In the valley of shadows he walked, and entered the gate without repining. All are equal there ; and the memory that he left, and the characters that he graved on the rock, while they move our pity, stir our wonder too.

ARTHUR BENSON.

BOULANGISM IN ENGLAND: A SPECULATION.

THE English disposition to treat General Boulanger as a charlatan should not blind us to the lessons which his career teaches. Not by any means for the first time is France obliging enough to furnish an object-lesson in political philosophy; and, whatever be the issue of the present attack upon French Parliamentary institutions, it is certain that General Boulanger's proceedings contain much matter for English reflection. England has now before it the spectacle of a man deliberately attempting to overturn a certain system of Parliamentary government; she will be very foolish if she does not ask herself whether an English Boulanger is not only possible but, perhaps, even probable.

Not that an English Boulanger would adopt in detail the methods of his French prototype. Whenever an attack is made upon the English Constitution, it will be a secret not an open assault. No Englishman, however bent he might be upon changing our democracy into some type of democratic imperialism, would dream of demanding a revision of the Constitution in his own favour. To do so would be to array against himself all the feelings for antiquity and for continuity which are so characteristic of the English genius. Our Boulanger will act under constitutional forms and in secret. Like Monk, "he will burn his shirt if he thinks it knows what he has in his mind". To the last he will be a stickler for Parliamentary forms, for he will find in them the most valuable assistants in the work of undermining the Constitution; he will flatter the voters as the embodiment of political wisdom, while he drills the ballot-boxes to express his own mind; he will be lavish of expressions of loyalty to the

Sovereign, while he plants himself securely in the seat of the Mayor of the Palace.

But this sort of thing cannot happen in England. Why not? England has no monopoly of freedom from the ordinary forces which are found in action in certain forms of political life. It is true that we have hitherto enjoyed an immunity from certain phenomena which have been disastrous to the institutions of other countries; but have we any guarantee that this immunity will last? So far from cherishing the peculiarities of our Constitution, we have of late years been engaged in steadily levelling it to an ordinary type of democracy. We have reduced the power of the Sovereign to a shadow. We have destroyed all the exceptional arrangements in our electoral system which prevented the House of Commons from becoming the mouth-piece of a single class of voters, and that class, with all deference be it said, the least gifted with political information. We have steadily impaired the system by which members of the House of Commons acted as the representatives of the nation and not as the delegates of their constituents, and it is now seriously proposed to make the members the paid servants of the voters—an arrangement which at no distant time would destroy the last vestige of Parliamentary independence. While this change has been going on in Parliament, the Executive Government has been made more and more the province of a single individual. In a way which was never contemplated fifty years ago, the Prime Minister, especially when he sits in the Lower House, is the Ministry; while the practice of resignation on an adverse general election makes him the choice neither of the Sovereign nor of Parliament, but of a

plébiscite. The exchange of the ancient constitutional monarchy for a system in which under the guise of a monarchy, a single individual is chosen by a household suffrage to carry out the wishes expressed at a general election, is within the range of practical politics. Nor is history silent upon the probable future of such a democracy. She shows that, roughly speaking, political institutions follow a certain defined orbit, in which absolute monarchy, oligarchy, and democracy succeed one another. So far England has followed the usual course. What next? To democracy succeeds imperial democracy, or, in other words, the community commissions a single individual to carry its will into effect. There is no necessity that the new leader should call himself a Cæsar. In Florence it was years before the Medici assumed any title to indicate their actual sovereignty; but, for all that, freedom—active, living freedom—passed away from Florence, and prepared the way for political inanition and consequent disaster.

What may be the exact form in which the English democratic system will be threatened with final extinction it is impossible to say; but it is certain that in General Boulanger we have the type of at least two sources of danger—that from the popularity of a great military leader, and that from the ambition of a great Parliamentary manager. In General Boulanger's case the absurdity of the situation lies in the fact that the present aspirant to Imperialism is neither the one nor the other, but in his imagination he is both. Already he sees in himself the hero of *la revanche*, and it seems to be universally accepted as an axiom that the man who could drive the Germans out of Alsace and Lorraine would be accepted by the French people as Dictator for life.

The danger of handing over our destinies to a successful commander is not the most pressing on this side of the Channel, but as it is a contingency which has

arisen more than once, it is worth while to examine the power of resistance which English institutions possess. The thought of a successful military leader at once brings to mind the names of Cromwell and Wellington. Cromwell, as the representative of the winning army in a civil war, crushed for the time free Parliamentary life, and after his death nothing but disunion in the army itself prevented another of the generals from continuing his system. Neither before nor after his death did Parliament, as the embodiment of civilian opinion, show the slightest ability to hold its own against the wishes of the military. In any similar conflict such will invariably be the case. The celebrated passage in which Burke foretells the growth of Napoleonism in France is just as applicable elsewhere :

" In the weakness of one kind of authority, and in the fluctuation of all, the officers of an army will remain for some time mutinous and full of faction, until some popular general, who understands the art of conciliating the soldiery, and who possesses the true spirit of command, shall draw the eyes of all men upon himself: armies will obey him on his personal account. There is no other way of securing military obedience in this state of things. But the moment in which that event shall happen, the person who really commands the army is your master; the master (that is little) of your king, the master of your whole Republic."

Cromwell's case, however, is exceptional; that of the Duke of Wellington demands closer attention. It is true that he made no attempt to make himself predominant either as Mayor of the Palace or as a Parliamentary manager; but was he restrained by causes which are likely to recur? Marlborough, as is well known, attempted to secure the position of Captain-General for life; Napoleon overturned the institutions which his genius had saved; and though America furnishes the examples of Washington and Grant, it would be unsafe to rely upon instances of men whose moderation has been too much praised as conspicuous to give any security for its recurrence. Nor do the obstacles

which might have rebuffed Wellington, had he been inclined to emulate the part of Charles Martel, exist now in anything like the strength they did in his day. Then such an aspirant would have found his chief obstacle in the existence of the sovereign; in these days the existence of the sovereign can hardly be regarded as an obstacle at all. Loyalty to the monarch, so far from being a hindrance to a rising Mayor of the Palace, would be an aid, for he could use it most effectively as a stalking-horse behind which his real designs could be concealed. No British Cromwell will ever again begin his career by deposing his sovereign; to do so would be to uncover too rudely the nakedness of his own schemes. There would, however, be no temptation to such an act of folly, for since the time of George the Third the name of ruler and the reality of government have been so effectively divorced that it would be an anachronism to reunite them. None the less might democracy be replaced by Cæsarism under monarchical forms, the Cæsar and the monarch not being the same.

Had Wellington aimed at supreme power while retaining the form of monarchy, he would also have been confronted by the resistance of an aristocracy strong not only in individual influence, but as a class more powerful in Parliament itself than either the masses or any single individual. From such an aristocracy Boulanger has nothing to fear. In France they have changed all that; but would the aristocracy be any more effective in England? In our days the rise of manufacturing wealth, of increased facilities for communication, of the press and of the caucus, have materially weakened the influence of the aristocracy. Such a levelling may be in accord with the spirit of the age, but it certainly tends to render the advance of a Cæsar more easy. Alike in the physical and political world it is the dead

level which is most easily brought under subjection.

Nor would it be only at the close of a war that the democracy would be in danger. The next great international contest will put a tremendous strain upon the English Constitution. No country governed as England is has ever yet waged a great war. The case of the Napoleonic struggle is not to the point, because the government of Great Britain was then to all practical purposes an oligarchy. That of the American civil war is inapplicable, because Lincoln and his Ministers enjoyed "fixity of tenure" for four years, which gave Lincoln's method of "pegging away" a chance of success. In England the Government would neither have fixity of tenure nor would they rest upon the support of a tolerably informed and very resolute class; they would be liable to be sent about their business at any moment by the fluctuating and imperfectly instructed opinion of the masses. Again we should either have a general of the Crimean stamp who would command little enthusiasm, in which case the Ministry would be allowed to muddle on until we were either beaten or escaped disaster by a chapter of accidents, or we should have a really competent commander. A Wellington engaged in a life and death struggle would soon be immensely popular. Ministers would be kept in power to carry out his wishes; members of Parliament would be elected to support him; supplies would be granted at his demand; ordinary party politics would be at a standstill. Can we take it for granted that such an officer would on his return be willing to allow the Ministers to escape from his control? Is it not more likely that he would attempt to retain his influence? He might not in name be even a Minister, but his word would be of more weight than that of any Minister. He would in reality be Director-in-Chief of the politics of

the State. In France it is assumed that such a one would be a real Imperator. Can we flatter ourselves that we are safe here?

But if the case of a Napoleon or a Cromwell obtaining paramount influence appears too remote, have we nothing to fear from the ambition of a successful Parliamentary manager? Of late years politics have been very personal. Great masses of voters are little swayed by ideas. They like names; they tend to create for themselves an Arimanes and an Oromasdes of contemporary politics. Such a state of things constitutes an immense temptation to a popular leader to stimulate rather than to check this tendency towards sinking the success of the cause in the promotion of the individual. Only too easily does his popularity become a species of worship. The most severe self-restraint can alone prevent this worship from assuming dimensions altogether disproportionate to the position of a subject. If full rein is given to the popular tendencies, the whole apparatus of modern life is ready to stimulate the unhealthy cravings of political idolatry. Even if he does not act himself, his supporters are only too eager to act for him. The careful advertisement of his comings and goings, the arrangement of deputations and receptions, and the systematic organization of enthusiasm may all be used, as they are being used by General Boulanger, to bring the personality of the would-be idol into undue prominence. The invention of personal badges, the manufacture and sale of keepsakes, the elaboration of popular titles, ought to be equally reprobated and eschewed. Even more dangerous to freedom is the practice of writing testimonials for candidates at Parliamentary elections, a practice which has become far too common in this country. To say, as General Boulanger has said, "In voting for M. —— you are voting for me," is to turn an election into a *plébiscite*; and even in its more innocent form it is a distinct step to-

wards the nomination of Parliamentary candidates by a single individual, which is equally objectionable whether the nomination comes, as formerly, from the Treasury or from the borough-monger, or, as in modern times, from the manipulator of the caucus. All honour, therefore, to such politicians as invariably set their faces against each and all of these stimulants to personal popularity and aids to power; when they are universally adopted the process of demoralization will indeed be rapid.

It is the earlier steps towards Cesarism which are the most subtle, and, therefore, the most likely to escape detection. The later movements are obvious enough, but more difficult to defeat. When any statesman has once succeeded in surrounding his personal life with the halo of loyalty that ought to be reserved for the Sovereign; when a majority of the House of Commons has been elected not to support a given policy but to vote for him; when he has accustomed the voter to regard his manifesto as authoritative statements of what they are to take as their creed; there will then be no difficulty in finding compliant colleagues and in making such arrangements as shall secure a tenure of power. Such a man would make sharp work with the House of Lords. Either he would "end it, or mend it" in such a manner as to secure for himself the nomination of a majority of its members. Probably the latter, as it would add another to the sham bulwarks by which the nation would believe that its liberties were maintained. Such a man would have ample opportunity for bribery and corruption, for the House of Commons being composed of his creatures, Parliamentary surveillance would be a farce. The closure will give him the means of reducing Parliamentary debate within the limits of his personal convenience. The mass of the people, careless of theoretical liberty so long as they think that their wishes are being carried into execution, would accept his flattery as sufficient compen-

sation for taking his orders as the guide of their political conduct, and would receive his denunciations of the motives and principles of the minority as conclusive evidence of the necessity of maintaining him in power. Whether Great Britain might not be for a time more powerful abroad and better administered at home under such a system in the hands of an able man than under the present hap-hazard

arrangement, is a matter for speculation ; but those of us who would regard such stagnant security as dearly bought by giving up the independence of Englishmen as individuals, would do well to look around us and see whether we can detect any likelihood of a campaign similar to that of General Boulanger being undertaken with success in this country.

THE POET AS HISTORIAN.

"Of all Writers under the sunne, the Poet is the least lier."

—SIR PHILIP SIDNEY.

A POINT of some importance in literary criticism was raised by an *obiter dictum* of the "Athenaeum," occurring in its review of Mr. Browning's last volume. "We are by no means sure," wrote the reviewer, "that poets in creating imaginary characters will in future times continue to think it worth their while to christen them after the characters of history, calling them Thomas à Becket, Mary Stuart, Paracelsus, Sordello, Bernard de Mandeville, and what not. We are by no means sure that they will always consider themselves justified in doing so. They have no doubt the highest authority for this kind of dramatic art—the very highest; but then, as regards Mr. Browning he sets himself to spurning authority in art. As Carlyle has said, the mere facts of history have a special and peculiar preciousness of their own just because they are facts and not poetic fancies about facts." The "Athenaeum" concluded that the question was too large and important a one to be discussed there and then. This conclusion was tantalizing, because a thorough consideration of so interesting a point by such an authority would doubtless have been in the highest degree instructive. But there is this consolation. The dictum remains an *obiter dictum*, and there is place for repentance before it is made into a binding decision. Such critical *dicta* need not in general be taken too seriously, but there is undoubtedly something disquieting about these solemn sentences. They are disquieting because they seem to be symptomatic. It really looks as if science were going to break out in a fresh place. The "Athenaeum" talks only of the present and the future, and shrinks from condemning Shakespeare.

But if its contention be true, it cannot escape the logical necessity of condemning the past as well. If history be fruit forbidden to the poets of to-day and to-morrow as poets, it cannot but be that the poet Shakespeare also transgressed the law in plucking of this tree. Truly, so far from being the persecuted Cinderella of Mr. Huxley's portrayal, science seems to be a persecuting Bluebeard rather, ever craving fresh victims for that grim closet. Has it indeed come to this, that the poet as well as the romancer is solemnly required to withhold his sacrilegious hand from the sanctuary of history? Must, then, the deeds of the mighty dead lack henceforward the glory of undying verse? Must a wiser world sadly put away its Tennysons and Brownings, and take to its widowed bosom the bulky volumes of the Norman Conquest? If our newly awakened historical conscience is going thus to offend, placing such stumbling-blocks in our spirit's path, one is tempted to think it were better at once to pluck it out and cast it from us, and to enter into life maimed.

It is droll to find Carlyle cited as an authority for this high and dry scientific view, to the sterner sort Carlyle himself being little better than one of the poets. In some other *obiter dicta*, less solemn than the "Athenaeum's," Mr. Birrell has had to defend Carlyle from an attack directed upon him from the same scientific quarter. The author of "The Life and Times of Stein" pleaded before the Historical Society of Birmingham (a very suitable forum) for "an organization of history similar to that by which science is maintained in its seriousness and rigour," in order that

history should not live "under the loose democracy of mere literature"—the democracy of Birmingham being, no doubt, no loose democracy, but a democracy seriously and rigorously organized. The author who had written "Ecce Homo," and who was to write "The Expansion of England," strangely bitter against what he styled "delightful history," condemned at once both Macaulay and Carlyle. Macaulay and Carlyle in the self-same Procrustean bed!—such strange bedfellows does adversity make acquainted. Well, we may leave Mr. Birrell to defend Clio and the mere literary historians. Assuredly it should be an easier task to defend "Richard the Third" and "Henry the Eighth," or indeed, Mr. Browning's poems, even if it be conceded that the parleyings do not represent with rigid accuracy some people of importance in their day. Does not the very word "defence" smack of impiety? Defend with our puny pens Goethe, Shakespeare, *Æschylus*! Which way should the advocate look when he met his clients in the court of heaven? With Professor Seeley delighting to honour Professor Mommsen and Bishop Stubbs there can be no quarrel. But with Professor Seeley delighting to dis honour Carlyle, with the "Athenaeum" fearing lest Shakespeare impair the special and peculiar preciousness of the mere facts of history, it should, we venture to think, be war to the death.

It is not quite clear whether the solicitude of the "Athenaeum" is on the behalf of poetry or of history, but it would hardly contend seriously, one would think, that historical characters and actions are bad material for poetry. It is indeed somewhat difficult to understand how the "Athenaeum" would have the poet to proceed. The Shakespeare of the future, it seems (if such there be in the womb of the future) will create an imaginary Henry the Fifth, for example, but he will not think it worth his while to christen his creation after Harry of Monmouth.

Must he go further, and evolve from his poetical consciousness imaginary nations waging an imaginary war, trusting to the same source entirely for manners and customs, dress, weapons, tactics and what not? Or is he at liberty to paint to the best of his poor poet's ability England and France at the end of their hundred years' struggle upon the condition that he does not breathe the syllables England, France, or Agincourt, or profess to portray a feudal society? We cannot but think, as we recall to mind the many great poems dealing with historical names and historical deeds, that, if only stern science will graciously permit, poets may continue to think it worth their while to christen their creations after the characters of history. The roll-call of these poems is the proper and overpowering answer to such a question; the thunder of the great names should be enough to overwhelm the questioner. What, after all, is a theory of the "Athenaeum" weighed in the balance with Shakespeare's triumphant practice?

The question remains whether science is to vouchsafe its permission. Alas, that a literary journal—our own familiar friend in which we trusted—should already be found to hint, that the poet ought not any longer in a scientific world to consider himself justified in using his poet's fancy to tamper with the virgin facts. If it had been an open enemy that had done us this dishonour, methinks we could have better borne it. But let us examine a little and see whether the pretender to the exclusive possession of the ground have a title absolutely without flaw. And first of all, where are we to look for these same virgin facts in all their special and peculiar preciousness? It is a matter of melancholy experience that they are not to be had on oath in a Court of Justice. Half-a-dozen sworn eye-witnesses of a common assault will give half-a-dozen narratives of a rich variety. In the case of historical facts,

the only question is, whether we shall have the tampering spirit of the poet or of the chronicler, or of the historian literary or scientific. Go whither we will, we cannot escape this spirit of men. If we climb up into poetry it is there, if we go down to scientific history it is there also : to say nothing of taking the wings of the morning and flying with the "delightful" historians. And of this be sure, it is not all gain to exchange poetic for prosaic fancy. For again let us ask, what precisely is meant by the mere facts of history ? Mere antiquarian research, disdaining or suspecting the creative spirit of the imagination, can at best but unearth a skeleton of the living truth, ay, and but a fragment of a skeleton ; a blank form of facts, a mere series of such abstract statements as that so and so killed so and so in such a time and place. Everything beyond this, everything which fills the blank form with living reality, everything which gives to historical facts their value and interest, comes of the personalities of the actors, and the nexus of motives, aims, beliefs and principles which go to make up the action. Now these things are beyond the reach of mere research. These things demand the quickening spirit, an effort of ideal reconstruction. This ideal reconstruction—poetic fancy about facts, if the "*Athenaeum*" will have it so—is as essential to the historian as to the poet ; and if it be a sin, the historian too, who is worth his salt, must cry, *Peccavi !* The facts of history, when they were not yet history but actual facts, were something very different from the valley of Dry Bones of the scientific historian. They were the meeting points of far-radiating spiritual issues and had boundless spiritual significance. Is it not manifest that no amount of rigorously organized research can be in itself a virtue to breathe again through these bones the breath of life ? How much ideal reconstruction of personalities and principles is needful, before any attempt can be made to present the mere

facts of the deed of Charlotte Corday or the execution of Mary Stuart ? In what scales shall the scientific investigator weigh the conflicting motives, in what glass shall he catch the cross lights of policy and passion ? How long, think you, would it take all the students of the Birmingham Historical Society, however rigorously organized, to construct a catalogue of mere facts which would exhaust the difference, to take examples at random, between the stroke for freedom and a sister's honour of Harmodius and Aristogeiton, and the stroke of the Amalekite, not afraid to stretch forth his hand against the Lord's Anointed, who put a merciful end to the anguish of Saul ? Is it not clear that a dull soul may be a still more fatal obstacle than a luxuriant imagination even to the attainment of literal accuracy ? The truth of the matter is that in the simplest fact of history, in the most seemingly transparent historical character, there is more than the intellect of one man, perhaps more than the combined intellects of all men, can exhaust and interpret. If the world desires to know something of the truth of the hero and his deed, or a nation and its history, it should discourage neither poet nor plodder, but rather encourage men of the most diverse talents to present each such aspect thereof as he has eyes to see or heart to understand. Let the seer utter his vision and the man of science collate his chronicles and decipher his inscriptions ; and when we have looked upon this picture and upon that, and have fitted the facts into a thousand theories, we may at length begin to get a glimpse into the real significance of the thing itself. Which of us would entrust his own life and character finally and absolutely to the Historical Society of Birmingham ? If the "*Athenaeum's*" reviewer could in another sphere read an account of himself in the pages of future scientific histories, would he not, think you, long and justly long, to figure as the hero of novels and poems ; nay, perhaps to be parleyed

with by a future Mr. Browning (as having been himself a person of importance in his day), in order that the meagre outlines might be filled out to something like the fulness of his real spiritual stature? For the most vital part of the historian's task, the dramatic poet has the most essential qualifications even in the realm of mere knowledge. He has the loving insight into human nature and quick communion with the purpose of the ages that can read a character from a gesture, a policy from a stray recorded word.

It was on this that Carlyle was always insisting. The gist of his exhortation was the exact contrary of that which the "Athenaeum" suggests. He was for ever saying to the poet and novelist, not "Please, confine yourselves to your own pleasing fictions", but "Why waste your great gifts on unrealities? Use all the faculties God has given you to find and interpret the facts. Give us the real men and the real deeds that have made the world what it is".

It cannot, I am afraid, be denied that poetry has bequeathed to the world many a deluding portrait. But poetry has had no monopoly of error. And even here, I think the advantage is with the poet. He does not hold himself out as an historian in the strict sense. There is no rivalry, and there should be no deception. Poetry frankly offers itself as ideal reconstruction, and can therefore mislead none but the wilfully or culpably blind. Whereas the last historian is always for giving us absolute truth. His predecessor may have been ignorant, careless, or prejudiced; too many, not to mince matters, have palmed off a pack of lies upon a credulous world. But with the rising of this sun the mists of error are to scatter, and we are to have at last "the pure serenity of perfect light". The sagacious reader however does not take the historians nearly so seriously as they take themselves. He knows very well that in their pages he has got

not the very men as they lived and breathed, but the best idea of them that they could piece together from surviving clues. He knows that it is after all Mr. Freeman's "Cnut" or Professor Seeley's Napoleon as much as it is Shakespeare's Richard the Third or Mr. Browning's Paracelsus. But this is due to no warning from the historian; he tenders his narrative as gospel truth; and so sometimes the unwary may be deceived and led astray. That however is Mr. Birrell's business, and not mine. No man in his right senses can be misled by the Wolsey and Cromwell, whom he loves so well in his "Henry the Eighth". These are Shakespeare's Wolsey and Cromwell, and no lesser man's.

But I think we may take higher ground still on behalf of the poets. If Shakespeare's Richard the Third is not the real, he is at any rate an ideal Richard the Third. If the gallery of historical portraits with which poetry has enriched the world be not of a photographic accuracy, they none the less are possessions for ever, more precious than the great work of Thucydides itself. Nay, the mere literary historians too, when they err, at least enrich us with "delightful" histories, which are a joy for the moment if not a possession for ever. The scientific historian perhaps does not often fall; but if he falls, he falls like Lucifer. What historian has given us men and women, whom we could think of taking in exchange for Shakespeare's Coriolanus or Brutus, for Richard the Third or Wolsey, for Cleopatra or Queen Katharine or Constance the mother of Prince Arthur, even if it be that these characters do not commend themselves to the latest historical criticism? Or what accuracy of information about the tactics at Agincourt would we accept in place of a single line like "We few, we happy few, we band of brothers"? Is there not truth here too, ay and the highest kind of truth, the truth of patriotic feeling, the truth of the brotherhood begotten of the common

peril, the truth of true warrior kingship? Poetry is really truer than the literal truth. It is so with all art. I wonder whether the reader remembers a collection of drawings of Prout and Hunt in 1879—80, for which Mr. Ruskin contributed some characteristic notes. About a drawing by Prout of a well at Nuremberg Mr. Ruskin wrote: "All the projecting windows and all the dormers in this square are of wood. But Prout could not stand the inconsistency, and deliberately petrified all the wood. Very naughty of him! I have nothing to say in extenuation of this offence; and, alas! secondly, the houses have, in reality, only three stories, and he has put a fourth on, out of his inner consciousness! I never knew him do such a thing before or since: but the end of it is, that this drawing of Nuremberg is immensely more Nurembergy than the town itself, and a quite glorious piece of mediæval character". Or, since Mr. Ruskin is not precisely a witness to convince the scientific, let us call Thucydides. Admirably scientific as was his method, Thucydides had no slavish superstition about literal accuracy, but, in his celebrated speeches, he too dared to be truer than the literal truth, "to consider principally what might be pertinently said upon every occasion to the points in debate". The actual speakers of Corcyra or Plateæa we may be certain never grasped the whole import of the situation with the grip of the great historian: they never had the philosophic insight with which he endows them. Yet these speeches are the kernel of the history and contain much of its most important truth. Poetry and romance and art distil the very spirit of truth out of the facts. It is to them, after all, that we owe the most vital and fruitful ideas of history. Never in the work-day world was there an historical Age of Chivalry; never on the sinful earth was there an historical Age of Faith. Be sure that

these too are but an "added gleam", a "light that never was on land or sea", that here too we have "the consecration and the poet's dream". The medieval Catholic Church of devout imaginations is historically as unreal as Arthur's Round Table. But in another sense both Round Table and Mediæval Church were real with the highest kind of reality. Such ideals, and such ideals alone, it is which give any permanent reality to the fleeting generations of men, who, save in so far as they embody them in their lives, are but as the beasts that perish. The real spirit of an age only comes at last to its proper expression in the spirit of its secular poet. Shakespeare is the highest truth of feudal England, as Dante was the truth of Catholic Italy or Homer of heroic Greece. Shakespeare's England is what England had aspired to be, had striven to be, had attained to being in certain moments and in certain men:

"This royal throne of kings, this sceptred
 isle,
This earth of majesty, this seat of Mars,
This other Eden, demi-paradise,
This fortress built by Nature for herself
 Against infection and the hand of war,
This happy breed of men, this little world,
This precious stone set in the silver sea,
 Which serves it in the office of a wall
Or as a moat defensive to a house,
 Against the envy of less happier lands,
This blessed plot, this earth, this realm,
 this England,—"

All honour then to the earnest scientific investigator; but honour likewise to the "delightful historians", to Herodotus and Livy, to Clarendon and Macaulay, to Michelet and Carlyle; and glory in the highest to Shakespeare and the poets. For, as Wordsworth finely said: "Poetry is the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge; it is the impassioned expression which is in the countenance of all Science. Poetry is the first and last of all knowledge—it is as immortal as the heart of man".

W. P. J.

SEAS AND RIVERS.

At the present day men are prone to love not Nature, but their own feelings projected upon Nature ; they refuse to receive her beauty simply, and rather choose to analyse the impressions which it produces. Those who carry this mental habit to excess contradict her great purpose, which is to lift us out of ourselves to the contemplation of a diviner loveliness. And Nature revenges herself. Rocks and peaks and stony slopes, the cataract and the thunder, mock us with distorted images of our own passions ; they echo back the wrath, the envy, the despair with which our own souls are distracted. We become the victims of Nature and of ourselves. Men who assiduously cultivate this extreme sensibility, who receive nothing but what they give, who think of natural objects only as mirrors for their own thoughts, men in fact who claim as their own vesture the wedding garment or the shroud of Nature, learn at the last to love her only because she is a silent listener. She ceases to be their teacher at the moment when they most need her searching lessons. There is no more prolific parent of religious doubt than this self-concentrated morbidity of feeling.

In spite of an introduction which seems to condemn both question and answer, the purport of the following pages is to inquire wherein lies the secret of the different charms which seas and rivers exercise upon mankind. Does it not consist in this that a river is always man's familiar friend, while the sea despairs human companionship ?

The sea is a wild creature among the caged, a free spirit among the bound. Men of high intellect, tempestuous character, or stormy passion, may find among the waves a society which

nothing human will replace ; and even ordinary mortals are sometimes lifted by gusts of feeling to wind-swept summits where the confused roar of ocean becomes distinct and articulate music. But "Rule Britannia" and patriotism apart, the habitual playmate and fellow of the sea is wild Nature. Man is always an interloper ; the sea is Nature's solitary and lone enthusiast.

At sunset the sea, like a loyal servitor, squanders all the treasures of its wine-dark depths upon the obsequies of the dethroned monarch ; on the broad bosom of the sea the moon sheds her tears for her secret fault in heaven ; no other space than that of the sea is vast enough to be the camping-ground of the starry hosts ; to the music of its waves the legions of the winds sweep on in rapid rushing march, in its waters the eagle renews his strength and lustiness, and in them at his hundredth year he perishes. But from man the sea holds haughtily aloof. As it mocks his thirst, so it never craves his sympathy, nor mingles with the trifles of his life. It may accord with, but it never reciprocates, human feelings ; man seeks the sea, the sea seeks not man.

The sea is the highway of nations, but for individuals it is pathless. It speaks with the voice not of one man but of countless thousands ; its moan resembles not the sob of human anguish, but the muttered cry of great wild beasts, or the sound of the storm as it sweeps through a forest of pines. Even the birds seems to breathe the spirit of their playmate ; their note is wild, strange and desolate. We cannot endow the vast solitudes and silent spaces of the sea with human interest ; they are too immeasurable for conscious poetising, too wide for formal handling : their effect can only be rendered by those who are absorbed

in the spirit of their pervasive influence. The "many-twinkling smile" with which ocean greets "the sun's uprise majestic" does not beam for us; it may brighten our mirth, but we form no element in its gladness. We play no part in the sullen fury of the sea when it flings itself in reckless rage upon an iron-bound coast; we have no share in its hopeless melancholy as it beats itself upon the beach with the monotonous persistency of despair.

" Man's steps are not upon thy paths, thy fields
Are not a spoil for him : thou dost arise
And shake him from thee ! "

Even a long voyage breeds no friendship, though it may foster familiarity, between ourselves and the sea. What a relief it is from the proud solitude of Nature when a sail or a smoke-stack breaks the level sweep of the horizon ! How gladly do seafarers recognise in the clouds some familiar shape which recalls mother earth, or welcome some tired land-bird which, like themselves, is a waif borne by the winds from the wished-for shore !

Even in repose the chief feeling which the sea creates is that of sleeping strength. In the nameless peace of its calm, it is treacherous ; in the power of its storm it is terrible. Its waters are brackish with the salt of human tears ; its surges ring the knell and its foam weaves the shroud of its victims. Life in fishing-villages is grim and sombre in its colour ; the inhabitants are, as it were, pensioners on the fitful moods of an element which has death as well as riches in its gift. It is the chilling thought of this mercilessness which stirs a female poet like Mrs. Hemans to long for the day when, in Scriptural phrase, "there shall be no more sea", and to heap upon the ruthless element indignant epithets as the spoiler of the earth. Even Byron, in his great hymn of praise to the ocean, claims the wrecks as adjuncts of the sea's magnificence. He glorifies the

sea by humbling the earth and man — by contrasting its imperishable, unchanging might with the impotence of finite, mortal man, by opposing the free play of its gigantic will to the fate of earth doomed to be the bond-slave of human destinies. There is the bitterness of exile, but there is also poetic truth in Victor Hugo's treatment of the sea as one of those elemental forces, irresponsible, untamable, without power or will to spare, deaf to entreaty and blind to tears, which wages against mankind an unending war.

It is true that the sea has civilised the earth, and that, even now, with creeks and coves, bays, inlets, and harbours it stoops to play a part in common human life. In these, its gentler moods, it seems to assume the more stable and peaceful nature of the earth to which it ministers. Such was the guise it chiefly wore to the Greeks, when they peopled its untrampled floors and translucent depths with gods and goddesses. On our own southern coasts land-locked waters, veined in varying tints with currents, deeps, and shallows, seem thus to mimic on their smooth surface the soft beauties of the downs, those many-armed inland seas which are the playground of fleecy cloud-shadows as, chased by the wind, they roll round the islands of gorse and pine. But this is not the true province of the sea. Only in boundless wastes of water, which no horizon but its own determines, is it seen in its essential character of mystery and space ; only then does it appear as the ring of inscrutable inexorable fate that encircles the earth,

" The image of Eternity, the throne
Of the Invisible."

It is perhaps because the sea thus symbolises the end, rather than the course of life, the bourne towards which the traveller voyages, not the journey itself, that it has in common speech such melancholy associations. If we are hopelessly parted from an

object of love or of ambition, we feel that between us and our desire there floats something as wide and sad and impassable as the sea itself.

A river is, in most of these respects, the exact opposite of the sea. It is the emblem not of an unknown hereafter, but of man's present life. It craves that human sympathy which the sea repels ; it proffers love where the other inspires awe. A river is a mirror of human interests, a repository of human secrets, an artery which throbs with the full tide of human activities. The sea with its unfathomable depths, its unrestrained vastness, its careless spread of waters seems to mutiny against conventionality, to protest against all that is merely elegant or pretty. And partly for this very reason, it is the most powerfully emotional, the most strikingly spiritual, of all Nature's marvels. Intercourse with it makes men superstitious and imaginative, because they are in perpetual communion with something outside and unlike themselves. Rivers, on the other hand, enliven fancy, brighten artistic faculties, stimulate powers of perception and association. Who will measure the influence which these accidents of geographical position have exercised upon the characteristics of national genius ?

The sea springs into existence in the fulness of its strength without, as it were, any beginning of days. It ebbs and flows in obedience to known, but remote and mysterious, laws of Nature. Rivers grow up among us ; their whole course is spent in our midst. From first to last, with hand and foot and eye, we can trace their career, whether Arethusa-like they rise from a couch of snows in some Acroceraunian mountain, or whether their cradle is one of those springs in which all day long dances the cone of sand, as tiny and as merry as a fairy page, that is the presiding genius of their birth. And as rivers thus pass from sportive infancy to the strength of youth and the sobriety of years, so they wax and

wane in obedience to the same laws which make the blossom bloom and fade, the fruit swell and shrivel, the grass shoot forth and wither. A river is the friend of every age and of all the world. It babbles to the infant, chatters to the child, sighs with the lover, whispers soft and low to the aged. All creatures make their way to the spring. It attracts to itself all that is green and fresh and fair ; it is the fountain of youth and life. No work is too great for the river to undertake, no trifle too mean to command her service. Servant and goddess in one, she can, woman-like, perform the highest, and adorn the humblest task. On the one side a river bore the signal for the noblest struggle for liberty that the world has ever witnessed when Tirol rose in arms against the foreign invader ; on the other, with what a rippling laugh and supple grace does Undine throw herself into the arms of the waterwheel, and bribe the dull drudge to be her playfellow.

We have ceased to personify the human attributes of rivers, or weave them into graceful myths. With their introspective habits of mind, modern writers have been more struck with the general epitome which rivers present of human life, than with the characteristics of our nature which they reproduce in detail. The allegory which is thus conveyed has been so variously interpreted and so constantly applied, that it has become a commonplace of language from which we turn with an impatient gesture. And yet how closely are rivers drawn to humanity when they are thus regarded !

The brook that dances down the mountain side is too swift, too egotistical to heed the objects on its banks. Exulting in its growing strength, eager to play its part with the great streams which flash like silver bows in the plain below, it murmurs fretfully against every obstacle. Then, when the romance of its early course is ended, with what a miser's clutch it grasps what it once despised, with

what wistful eagerness does it reflect every picture which colours the monotony of its level banks. Yet it is water running apace. It cannot carry with it on its onward course any single image however treasured ; the object which each drop makes its own with such loving solicitude, slips from its grasp and becomes the property of its successor. As the stream swirls and eddies round the piers of a bridge, it seems to seek some nook or ledge or cranny in which to rest and take a lingering farewell of the green riband upon the distant hill-side. But the unreturning waters glide ever onwards ; its course has begun ; it cannot pause or stay. And now, as the murmur of the ocean sounds louder and more distinct, and as the music of the tides setting towards eternity falls more clearly on the ear, the tired stream

creeps sluggishly along, cherishing to its travel-stained breast some sprig of mountain heather. The clear bright brook which laid bare every secret of its pebbly bed, the half-grown stream that still bore the sky and clouds in its pure bosom, has become a dark turbid river that no eye can fathom. Yet it has done man's work. It has cleansed and purified great cities ; and like the human soul, infinite in its spiritual capacity and able in remote recesses to contain the better world, so the river is never so impure that it cannot picture the firmament above. Over its mud-stained depths, as well as over its bright shallows, floats heaven itself. In the ocean which it fast approaches it will be cleansed of all its filth and slime.

R. E. PROTHERO.

JOE GRIFFITH.

It is strange how solemn a sweet-ness the associations of childhood and early youth have for men's minds ; how they will cling to an ancient observance, or a bygone manner of speech, and how the friends whom they loved at that time of innocence are never spoken of, be they unworthy or long since dead, without a, " Well, well—poor fellow ! " and a sigh, very genuine and heartfelt. Their names, too, will call up memories, nay, whole scenes, as certain odours and sounds bring back many things freshly to the mind, that might else have slumbered forgotten.

See yonder portrait that hangs above the old *secrétair*—that of the child with his little bare neck, hugging up a bright-eyed terrier on his knees. The scent of crushed rose-leaves even now carries me back to the old-fashioned fragrant room where the picture was painted, and to that time when my soul was the soul of the bright-eyed child, when these wrinkled jaws were round and lusty, and these lean hands dimpled. I keep the picture there, where I see it as I write, and look at it with compassion, ay, with tears. It is I, and yet not I ; it is connected with me by memories known to no other ; yet it is as if that little child died yet innocent of the world, and a part of his spirit were merged in mine to keep it sweetened of gross thoughts, and to call it back to better things when it wandered, by the touch of that pristine beauty and simpleness.

A certain deep note of a clock, not, as I think, now often heard, strikes in me the sound of the eight-day time-piece on the landing at my grandfather's house, that aroused me on many a bright summer morning, when I would run to the casement and lean

my head amongst the dewy white roses and so dress quickly and out on to the downs, where the larks rose up on every side, as I scampered like a young colt, and my heart sang with them.

There is a tune too, a little simple thing ('tis a *Farewell to the Piano*, or some such name) that I have often heard *her* play very sweetly and sadly, and indeed 'twas the last thing that ever she touched before she went where, as I then thought and still think, the angels could have but little to teach her, whether of music or of virtue. And although indeed this lady was never my wife, for she died when I was scarce more than a boy, yet that little sad melody ever conjures up in me a picture of a white-robed fair creature at a square tinkling piano, and the summer air blows through the window on her and the boy, who draws in every note, every movement, as an inspiration.

Bah ! it is winter ! Open windows, forsooth ! The very thought makes me fancy that admonitory twinge between the shoulders ; yet see—yonder, wandering down the snowy paths—foolish children ! I will open the casement and summon them,—but no ! let them gather their rosebuds while they may, as saith Mr. Herrick, even though 'twere in the snow.

So long have I circled round that on which I am to write as one wanders round a house which by a hidden attraction draws him ever nearer, while yet he fears to enter. There is one, the best friend man ever had, dear from old association and long friendship, who only in these late few months is become but a memory. Poor old Joe Griffith ! One cannot but call him poor, in the view of his lonely life and hard struggle with fate ! and yet 'tis the epithet perhaps that

he would least have affected, for I never knew man who (to be so tender-hearted) was so full of pride and independence. We were lads at school together, where those juveniles, with the inconsiderateness of youth, would dub him "old Gory", and "the Griffin", from his readiness to discover insults, and his fierceness in resenting them, whether for himself or for one he loved.

He has sat by my side through play-hours, bathing the head that himself caused to ache by a straight blow between the eyes, dealt (very justly) when he caught me at beating a puppy ; and though he, for the most part, had a grievance, whether fancied or real, of his own, yet this did not hinder his eyes filling and his lean purse emptying (which is perhaps more rare) when he chanced to hear some moving tale of distress.

Griffith's relations—he had but few, and they of distant kinship—were poor, and he on the foundation, as 'twas called. His powers were very high, so that with little labour he kept a good position, and indeed attained in time to be head boy ; yet a slight or a reprimand would so oppress and distemper him that for days his power for work seemed gone, but of a sudden it returned, and he would be as a giant among us. I, that was always dull and of slow apprehension, ever retained for him something of the respect that such schoolboy feats were wont to inspire.

Joe was once caned. With hoarse voice and eyes, crab-like, starting from his head, he sought me to bid a solemn farewell. Such indignity was by no means to be borne ; he scorned to bandy words with his executioner, but he was about to quit for ever the abode of tyranny, to enlist—the yellow-haired boy, being then scarce five feet high—and his place should know him no more. And had not his master (fiery old Tranter, of the bitten nails, or rather no nails) been led to send him a sort of apology for a measure which was in truth over-hasty and unjust, I

much doubt whether our entreaties would have prevailed with this young rebel.

If you knew Griffith you have heard him speak of Doris, but would scarce imagine from such, as it were indifferent mention, that he loved this lady with a very lofty and, as I think, enduring passion. For he never again sought to marry, when she, petulant at some irritableness or jealousy, and not perhaps of depth to discern the true heart within this husky shell, quarrelled with her lover, who was of too proud a temper to seek a reconciliation, and yet went the rest of his days with an added shade of mourning to the gloomy cast of his nature.

Doris is now a grandmother ; yet 'twas but yesterday that I discovered in a drawer—along with a lock of his mother's hair and a piece of the silk gown she wore, the letters he learned at her knee and some blades of grass plucked from her grave—a relic of love as pure, and doomed to a fate yet more sad. 'Twas a paper, retained perhaps by accident or stealth, yellowed with time, and stained with a flower that had once been fragrant, and in a fine hand these words were traced : "Can Corydon doubt the faith of his Doris ? At noon to-morrow, by the red hawthorn, he may have an answer to such base suspicions."

Ay, 'twas always noted in Griffith that he loved the neighbourhood of a hawthorn tree, and would say that of all perfumes 'twas the most sweet in the world. He had too a most tender feeling for all women, though he would often cynically rail at their foibles and weaknesses. This rare tenderness of nature was seldom shown but in his writings, which made some say these were very different from the man, and yet in truth they were the man far more than that side that he had turned to the world, unless sometimes in his dealings with children, who loved him and he them.

"The Governor" and "Queen Mab" (so he nicknamed my two) liked nothing so well as a walk with Mr.

Griffith, who, with a hand held by each and his stick under his arm or frightfully brandished by my heir, would amble gravely along the crowded thoroughfares, attentive to their chatter and mindful of their pleasure.

Yet this man had at the time of his death scarce a friend left but myself with whom, I have sometimes thought, 'twas more easy for him to refrain from quarrelling, since I too was poor, and could be of little or no service to him. With publishers, editors, patrons, with friends who would willingly help him, but perhaps were incautious in attempting it, this sensitiveness and fierceness of temper oftentimes made a breach unavoidable; and though it was, in very fact, a "quarrelling with bread and butter", yet no thought of profit or advantage ever weighed in the slightest degree with this singular character, nor would make him humble himself nor submit to any kind of assumption. So it came about that in his last years he was yet poorer and more alone than ever before, for he made but little by his books—though there were some, and I was one, who thought him to have a very pretty conceit, with much tenderness and playful humour; yet, as I say, they had no great sale, and the newspaper men were somewhat unwilling to employ one who had so wide-spread a reputation for surliness.

With my young ones (now, alas! children no longer) he was always the same, bringing them often presents far above his means, as we knew and yet dared not remonstrate; helping the lad with his Greek and the girl

with her Italian, full of quaint information and sometimes of racy anecdotes. 'Twas but a few days before he died, as we remembered after, smiling and sighing at once, that he took a part in a little charade with so much spirit and wit, as I had not seen in him since we were boys together, so that all the room, taken by surprise, burst into one echoing laugh and tempest of applause.

He was found one evening leaning back in his chair as though he rested, his paper filled, his quill beside it; but he was dead and his face was happy. 'Twas well for him, and what I know he wished, that his end should be sudden and painless and his task done.

"But what," saith the reader perchance, "have we to do with this man—this hack, this literary drudge, of whom no one has even heard? True, we love to hear of the great and wise, whose most private history it is fitting to know, but of a Joe Griffith—such men are born by the thousand and drag out their wretched existence, and we neither know more of them, nor wish to know."

Ay, but sweet reader—most courteous reader—what, if under this presentment and pseudonym of "Joe Griffith" I but figured and shadowed forth, as it were, some greater luminary, who, little known perhaps in his life, hath, now he is departed, begun to receive ungracious recognition? What, I say, if this were so? Would he in that case find with you some slight favour or interest?

M. A. B.

THE SCOTTISH HORACE WALPOLE.¹

THE hero of these entertaining volumes has been placed in some danger of illustrating after a curious fashion Bentley's maxim, that no man was ever written down save by himself. No doubt they make good his claim to the title Sir Walter Scott gave him, of the Scottish Horace Walpole; but they do not so clearly exhibit him as that pattern of chivalry and kindliness which his friends claim him also to have been. There is a letter in this collection which exactly illustrates the difficulty a mere reader must experience in understanding such a character as Sharpe's. When Robert Chambers was busy with his "Traditions of Edinburgh" Sharpe supplied him with many scraps from those chronicles of old-world scandal which he had amassed with as much industry as most men are apt to give to the serious business of life. Among other things he had furnished some stories of Lady Lovat, widow of the notorious Simon Fraser, which, as one may suppose, had not presented that old lady in the most agreeable light. This brought Chambers into trouble. An ancient gentlewoman descended on him in wrath to vindicate her great-aunt's memory, whom she represented as a perfect paragon of amiability and politeness. Chambers accordingly published this other side of the case in the next instalment of his book, but before doing so wrote to let Sharpe know what had happened. He should account, he said, for its inconsistency with what he had already printed by pointing out that the former anecdotes expressed only a

stranger's external view of the old lady's character, while the new ones came from her own relations who had experienced her kindest offices and seen her of course in the best light. "I will not," he told Sharpe, "bate a word of what you gave me for all the Miss E—s in spinsterdom—I like it too well!" But he would give the other side of the story as well, and so leave her ladyship's character a little ambiguous. And this, he went on, would be quite fair, for Sir Walter Scott had told him once, in allusion to this very matter, that those old Scotch ladies had a very bitter *rind* which repelled strangers, while their *kernels* were tolerable enough, and that was what their friends tasted of them.

There is certainly a good deal of Sharpe's *rind* to be found in this correspondence. We are told that it was his way to express himself most sarcastically and contemptuously about persons and things which he most highly prized. This is very well, and his friends knew doubtless how to supply the necessary interpretation; but there is nothing to guide the stranger in this discriminating office. After reading the Oxford edition of Burnet's "History of My Own Times", in which the suppressed passages were first restored to the text, he says that he gives the bishop greater credit for veracity than he had hitherto done, "because he abuses his own friends very freely". Are we then to assume that Sharpe, when most bitter, is speaking most truth; or is this only another illustration of "pretty Fanny's way"? When still a lad at Christ Church he writes thus about Scott, with whom he had already begun a correspondence.

¹ "Charles Kirkpatrick Sharpe's Correspondence", edited by Alexander Allardyce, with a Memoir by the Rev. W. K. R. Bedford. In two volumes: William Blackwood and Sons, Edinburgh and London, 1888.

"The Border Minstrel paid me a visit some time since on his way to town, and I

very courteously invited him to breakfast. He is dreadfully lame, and much too *poetical*. He spouts without mercy, and pays compliments so high-flown that my self-conceit though a tolerable good shot, could not even wing one of them; but he told me that he intended to present me with the new edition of his book, and I found some comfort in that. He also invited me to his cottage in Scotland; and I promised him a visit with the same sincerity I practise in the affair of Mr. Yorkston's dinners. I do think that a little fib of this kind is a very venial sin; only, when the ice is once broken, people very often sink with a vengeance."

After Scott's death Lockhart wrote to Sharpe asking him for some account of the origin of their acquaintance, and especially of the impression the great man had made on him when they first met. It is to be presumed that Sharpe found some other impression than this for Scott's biographer.

The interesting memoir furnished by Mr. Bedford, Sharpe's nephew and executor, contains the report of another conversation with Scott, on the subject of Byron and his poetry, which still further illustrates Sharpe, and on more than one side. He had been finding fault with the humour of "Don Juan" and with "Beppo" for its vulgarity, and was surprised to find Scott disagreeing with him. Nor could they come together even over Byron's prose, which, strange to say, Scott did not seem to think bad, being even of opinion that the author of "Childe Harold" might have been also the author of the Adventures of a Greek (that is, of Hope's "Anastatius," which was very commonly set to Byron's credit on its first appearance). This strange critical blindness was, however, attributed to Scott's bad memory, as his general kindness for Byron was attributed to the silver vase which the latter had given to him. That last touch is eminently characteristic; no one but Sharpe would have hinted such a suspicion of Walter Scott. But perhaps this is only another instance of his "humorous dispraise" of the people he esteemed, like his comment on Scott's memory, perhaps after Porson's and

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Macaulay's, or we might indeed say with theirs, the most wonderful ever owned by man.

Both of Byron and Shelley Sharpe had but a poor opinion. To the latter, who was his contemporary at Oxford, he does indeed allow some smatterings of genius. "Talking of books", he writes to a friend from Christ Church,

"we have lately had a literary Sun shine forth upon us here, before whom our former luminaries must hide their diminished heads—a Mr. Shelley, of University College, who lives upon arsenic, aquafortis, half-an-hour's sleep in the night, and is desperately in love with the memory of Margaret Nicholson. He hath published what he terms the Posthumous Poems, printed for the benefit of Mr. Peter Finnerty, which, I am grieved to say, though stuffed full of treason is extremely dull; but the author is a great genius, and if he be not clapped up in Bedlam or hanged, will certainly prove one of the sweetest swans on the tuneful margin of the Cherwell Shelley's style is much like that of Moore burlesqued; for Frank is a very foul-mouthed fellow, and Charlotte, one of the most impudent brides that I ever met with in a book. Our Apollo next came out with a prose pamphlet in praise of atheism, which I have not yet seen, and then appeared a monstrous romance in one volume, called St. Irvyne, or the Rosicrucian. Here is another pearl of price! All the heroes are confirmed robbers and causeless murderers, while the heroines glide *en chemise* through the streets of Geneva, tap at the palazzo doors of their sweethearts, and on being denied admittance, leave no cards, but run home to their warm beds and kill themselves."

Many years later he writes to some nameless friend, addressed as "St. John of Jerusalem": "I send you the 'Cenci' written by that wicked wretch, Shelley, and well written. I remember him at Oxford, mad—bad—and trying to persuade people that he lived on arsenic and aquafortis". It is curious to find an invitation to a ball begged from a lady for this "wicked wretch", on the ground that he is "a very gentlemanly person and dances quadrilles eternally".

But poor Byron comes off even worse than Shelley. He is as mad and as bad (so the author of "Glenarvon" found him) and cannot even write. We have seen that his prose is vile, "Beppo"

vulgar, and the humour of "Don Juan" tedious; but better still remains behind. "Your curious bundle of ballads", he writes to Scott, "have given me more delight than anything I have puzzled out for a long while; and have restored my poetic stomach to its wonted tone after the nausea I endured on perusing the filthy, blackguard last cantos of 'Don Juan'." "Don Juan" is certainly not a delicate work, but Sharpe's literary stomach must have grown singularly weak with years. Nothing Byron ever wrote (at least that has been printed) can match for filthiness with many passages in Sharpe's own letters from Oxford to his mother and sister. Mr. Allardyce pleads that Sharpe is on the whole no worse than his contemporaries, though his "affection of archaism" may make him seem so. Be it far from us to dispute Mr. Allardyce's judgment, whose researches into the domestic annals of the past give him every title to form one: we can only say that for our own part we have never met elsewhere in the familiar correspondence of that time such bald brutalities as Sharpe permits himself to use to the female members of his own family. Mr. Allardyce says that it has been found necessary to omit only very few passages: to judge by what has been left, what has been taken must be startling indeed. In short, Sharpe seems to have been much of the same opinion with Mrs. Crewe, who, when warned by him that Aphra Behn's novels were not fit reading for ladies, made answer, "O, I don't mind that, genius is of no sex, you know".

There is another curious allusion to Byron in these letters, though not from Sharpe's pen. One of his correspondents was Keppel Craven, son of that clever, queer Lady Elizabeth Craven, whose second marriage had made her Margravine of Anspach. In 1810, Craven, then just come of age, set out on his travels, in the course of which he found himself often in the track of "Childe Harold",—which the Margravine, by the way, was taught by

Sharpe to find intolerable. In those parts Byron's report seems to have been something other than poetical. From Smyrna Craven writes: "I have heard much of him since I am come to these regions, and could tell you a secret which is not one wherever he has been, but shall wait till we meet, and in the meantime shall only observe that as he is not very popular among the Englishmen that were here and in Greece at the same time with him, I think it very lucky that he is such a good shot, as that will keep their tongues in order". If this secret was ever divulged to Sharpe, he had the grace to keep it to himself, for we may suppose it to have been one of no very good flavour. It is to be noticed that his low opinion of Byron did not prevent him from addressing a letter to that bad man and poet couched in the most fervent strains of adulation: "Being an humble admirer like all the rest of the world of your great poetical powers, stupendous in this age of 'Forcible Feebles', I must presume, concealed by many a Scottish mist . . . no poet, my Lord, has ever described the pangs of the human mind as well as you have done" &c., &c. The "presumption" consisted in suggesting the life and death of Charles the First as a good poetical subject, especially with regard to his remorse for Strafford's fate, "and particularly appropriate to the lyre of a descendant from the brother of the first Lord Byron": "with such a subject, and such powers as you possess, what may we not expect!" In the same letter he has a hit at Malcolm Laing's "History of Scotland", whose virulence against the house of Stuart is, he says, so personal and fresh, "that one could almost suppose him to be Charles's executioner condemned to the fate of the Wandering Jew". Sharpe was of course a staunch Jacobite, as became a descendant of the Laird of Lag, and something of a sentimental one, to boot; we find him, for instance, remonstrating with Scott for a not very delicate anecdote that the latter

had told him of Queen Mary, and assuring him that the heroine must have been "King William's Queen Mary when she was hereabouts with her father the Duke".

Mr. Bedford assures us that Sharpe's caustic side was reserved for "the shame of a world that had not treated him over kindly". There may be more of course in his story than meets the eye, but there is really nothing in these volumes to show that Sharpe had any grievance against the world. He came of a good old Border stock, and his residence at Christ Church, together with his own witty tongue and pen, brought him to the notice of many of both sexes able and willing to make life pleasant for him. He seems never to have been seriously pinched for money, and, in short, so far as a stranger can tell, to have led through life the way suggested by his own tastes and disposition. It is true that he failed to get his tragedy acted, a portentous thing wherein six characters spout eighteen hundred lines of the blankest verse through five acts; but on the other hand a little volume of ballads he published in his twenty-eighth year was praised quite up to its deserts. It is true that when his friends, on the death of Raeburn, made interest to get him appointed "King's Limner", the place was given to Wilkie; but that can hardly have been a very serious or unexpected blow. Nor can he have been much surprised that his few ventures in literature were not very remunerative, especially as, like Walpole before him, he affected to write only "as a gentleman," without any care for money, though this did not prevent him either from importuning Scott to puff his books in the "Quarterly Review", or, when money was wanted, trying to procure it from the publishers. The most important of his works was his edition of Kirkton's "Secret and True History of the Church of Scotland", which he received in manuscript from his friend Surtees, the historian of Durham, and which

luckily proved to be more trustworthy than some of that ingenious antiquary's discoveries. Sharpe's notes are often curious and interesting, and he added a valuable appendix in the shape of the most authentic narrative we have of Archbishop Sharp's murder, written by James Russell, one of the murderers, which also includes an account of the affair at Drumclog and the subsequent attempt of the Covenanters on Glasgow. But it is clear that Sharpe, though he had certainly amassed a most extraordinary quantity of strange learning, lacked the capacity to turn it to any profitable account; he seems to have had neither the taste nor the power for any systematic work. In short, he has very happily described himself in his criticism on a printer named Webster who had published some little piece of antiquity. "I think", writes Sharpe, "that he has found some really curious things in the Kirk-Session Records; but if he had been bred a cook, he could never have made good turtle-soup, for his arrangements, &c., are *naught*". A great part of Sharpe's learning was also like his arrangements, *naught*. Again like Walpole he seems always, to borrow Macaulay's stricture on the master of Strawberry Hill, to have been drawn by some strange attraction from the great to the little and from the useful to the odd. But Macaulay adds that Walpole with all his follies and vanities, his shallow pretensions to learning and taste, his ridiculous attempts at criticism on literature and the fine arts, possessed in an extraordinary degree the art of writing what people will like to read. This art, except in his letters, Sharpe certainly did not possess. "Dull, but very curious", he calls an old romance he had printed for the Bannatyne Club, and this description would serve for most of the things he busied himself with. The subjects on which he bestowed his editorial pains were not in themselves attractive, nor, with the exception of Kirkton, of any real importance.

In one instance, however, he did turn his pen to his country's service. The municipal projects for the improvement of Edinburgh, which were of course to consist mainly in wantonly effacing the old historic features of the good town, moved him to righteous wrath ; and his letters thereon to the papers, as well as his more active exertions, aided by the weighty influence of Scott, seem to have borne fruit. Whether he would have been more successful in original composition it is hard to say. Scott thought highly of his drawings, and he certainly had a happy touch with his pencil, in the graceful as well as the grotesque ; his portraits of the Margravine and of Lady Gwydyr are as delightful in their way as his dancing Queen Elizabeth is in hers. But Scott adds to his encomium this significant comment : " Strange that his finger-ends can describe so well what he cannot bring out clearly and firmly in words ". He made some progress with a life of Claverhouse, but threw the subject up in despair on the appearance of " Old Mortality " and gave what he had written to Mark Napier, who embodied it in his own volumes. Among those violent and confused pages Sharpe's fragment stands out in favourable light ; but it is a fragment only, being in effect little more than a rough digest of his researches so far as they had gone.

As to his taste in literature and the fine arts generally, it seems to have been, like Walpole's, more curious than sure. He tells one of his correspondents that for two-and-thirty years he and Scott never differed in their thoughts about any literary composition ; but we have seen that they differed very considerably about Byron, and there are some other subjects about which we suspect they would also have been found to differ. " Paradise Lost ", for example, is " a heap of blasphemy and obscenity ", though it is allowed to have poetical beauties ; but then Milton was a Whig, and consequently an Atheist, and his poem was composed

" to apologize for the Devil ", whom Sharpe agrees with Dr. Johnson in calling the first Whig on record. Fairfax's translation of Tasso is prettier than the original. Pope,—and here to be sure the critic will have many of our modern wits with him,— " runs all in couplets, and is now to me like a weak cup of tea with too much sugar in it ". Fielding and Richardson are more courteously treated, " Clarissa " being specially commended as " a perfect compendium of worldly wisdom " ; but Smollett, though some saving graces are allowed in " Humphrey Clinker ", is only a caricaturist, with nothing but vulgar, dirty humour to recommend him. Kneller was a great painter, because he " always made people look like ladies and gentlemen ", which Lely could never do, and *far less* Sir Joshua,—the italics are our own. Poor Sir Walter fared still worse ; when living he got compliments enough from his fastidious friend, but after death the tone took a change. His harmless romances, we are told, " not harmless however as to bad English, contain nothing ; pictures of manners that never were, are, or will be, besides ten thousand blunders as to chronology, costume, &c. &c., which must mislead the million who admire such captivating comfits ". He finds " Nicholas Nickleby " very amusing, and thinks the author " worth an hundred Sir W. Scotts, because he paints (extravagantly) *real* manners ; Sir Walter what never was, is, or will be ". Yet " Nicholas Nickleby " is but a caricature of human nature after all ; " a woeful falling off from Richardson and Fielding, with no probability, and what must die in a few years ". " Barnaby Rudge " is damned with yet fainter praise, the author being specially rebuked for the " ridicule cast on good breeding and common-sense in the character of Mr. Chester, who is the only gentleman and sane person in the whole history ". Rachel has a good voice, though much less good than Mrs. Siddons's, but an ungraceful and

often vulgar action ; and Jenny Lind's "highest note is a downright squall" though she is allowed to sing "very prettily" and have an excellent "shake". Of Mrs. Siddons in private life there is a terrible picture coloured in Sharpe's darkest tints. He had met her at dinner at Walter Scott's house in Castle Street, and was horrified to see "Belvidera guzzle boiled beef and mustard, swill streams of porter, cram up her nose with handfuls of snuff, and laugh till she made the room shake again". The process of disenchantment from these theatric spells has often been described before, but surely never with such cruel straightforwardness ! It is only fair to Sharpe to quote a prettier passage from the same letter, an account of a visit to the ruins of Linlithgow. "There was one little circumstance", he says, "respecting Linlithgow which struck me much. Tho' the sun was shining bright on the green fields, on the lake by the castle, and on the ruin itself, yet in the roofless chamber where Queen Marie was born lay a wreath of snow ! How emblematic of her miserable fortunes !"

Sharpe seems to have been fond of music, and there are some amusing stories of the performers and performances of the day. We find Lady Gwydyr writing to him about a version of the "Lady of the Lake" which Ebers was bringing out at the Italian Opera House in the Haymarket.

"I was wonderfully busy in assisting Ebers to bring out 'La Donna del Lago'. All your hints I had treasured up since Sir Walter was so kind as to confer with me on the subject, were brought forth ; but ignorance and conceit united are too much to contend with. Mme. Vestris, as Malcolm, positively refused to wear hose because they cut up her figure, so she came forth with long legs, looking like a forlorn young Norval ; but her bonnet, made under my orders, and adorned by eagles' feathers, which I gave her, had a beautiful effect, with a bit of laurel. Porto refused to sing in a brown mantle and white satin hose. So he was indulged with a full suit of my tartan. The kilt he tied almost round his neck, which had an odd effect ; but upon the whole the opera had a great run—targets, badges, brooches, horns, were all attended to."

And here is an amusing account from his own pen of a concert he had heard in Edinburgh, and the memories it evoked.

"You did me a very great favour by giving me the concert ticket, as I found ample space for my lameness, and heard one very beautiful duet of Marcello, an old composer, out of fashion in my time, when only Handel and Correlli, with now and then Purcell, kept their places, in spite of Haydn, Pleyel, and a long list of flimsy musicians. I never heard anything of Marcello before, and was enchanted. Then Miss Birch sang 'Let the bright Seraphim' very well, only her voice is too weak for that delightful composition. She has a very good close shake, which all the singers I hear now, Grisi among the rest, want ; and to my antiquated ears, most songs without a good shake are like beef without mustard. I once heard Mara sing 'The bright Seraphim', and what a voice !—but then the trumpet was naught, and spoilt all, so this performance was more pleasing. Talking of Mara, who was the best singer I ever heard, I remember an anecdote about her when I first went to Oxford, amusing enough. She used to come from London to sing in the music-room, but always sulky (when I heard her), sitting down whenever she could, and tossing up her nose, a very ugly one, in great disdain. The reason of this was, that one evening, at a former time, she had to sing the famous 'Horse and his Rider' by Handel, the recitative of which begins, 'And Miriam, the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand'. Now madam, who was supposed to use cordials to keep up her spirits, in place of 'took a timbrel', sang 'took a tumbler', which set the whole room a-laughing. Down she sat ; then there was a hiss—then she wept : but she was forced to finish the song, and revenged herself afterwards by the saucy airs I mentioned, and composing an epigram, of which the last line proves that whatever ear she had for music, she had none for poetry :

"Oxford no more,—let Cowford be your name,
For breeding up such calves, to your eternal
shame".

The music-room here is surely ill-constructed as to the orchestra, which is a box to confine sound : it should be expanded. But nothing confined the creaking harmony of the shoes belonging to the *musicians* with wands, which made me shake to retain laughter, like an old ass as I am—it was so truly Athenian. Then there was the eternal Sir Thomas, flying about in his bristles, like an ill-painted picture of Moses coming down from the Mount : Sir Adam Hay nodding time to the music ; and a fat woman nodding another way, with a start every now and then at a bad note".

So far, we say, as a stranger can tell, the world treated Sharpe well enough,

more civilly indeed than he treated the world, as shown in these letters. The solitariness of his life seems to have been dictated only by his own choice. On his father's death in 1813, his mother left the ancestral, and apparently rather gloomy, halls of Hoddam Castle, on the banks of the Annan in Dumfriesshire, for Edinburgh, and there Sharpe, who was certainly a devoted son, made his home for the rest of his life (which closed in 1851), first with her in Princes' Street, and afterwards in Drummond Place. Out of Edinburgh he seems rarely if ever to have moved, though at times his fancy prompted him to make his home at Oxford, for which, despitefully as he had written of it in his silly youth, he always, like most of her sons, retained a peculiar fondness. His friends would have welcomed him gladly either as a visitor or travelling companion, but he seems to have refused all invitations,—even Abbotsford could not tempt him. His health seems to have broken early, to judge from a melancholy account he gives of himself in his forty-third year, and he was haunted with the dread of being found troublesome: "I suspect", we find him writing to Sir Walter, "that if I were to visit as my friends ask me, I should soon not have one left,—nay, I am quite certain of it from some experience". This was considerate; but he must have been in a bad way indeed to resist such an offer as this: "I want you to quit your painters and spare me a week or two at Abbotsford this fine weather. You shall have your own room and breakfast at your own hour. I will neither walk you nor talk you when you are disposed to sit still or be silent, and you have a large book room and plenty of queer reading". Travelling he seems always to have detested, and his early journeys, from Hoddam to Oxford and occasionally to London, were the limit of his experiences of it. One of his early letters explains his views on this score with all his wonted animation.

"It is now, let me see, good thirteen years since my mind was made up concerning tours to the Highlands or Lowlands—by sea, or through the air in a balloon—that they are the most nauseous, miserable, comfortless amusements in nature. What can people cooped up in a cage or barrel, or straddling and jumbling together on horse-back, do but quarrel? The very motion shakes up all the sentiment of ill-nature or peevishness in the soul, and every jolt of the carriage or stumble of the beast makes the cork of prudence fly out of the bottle, and your vinegar spirit upon one another's faces. Take Job, that Hebrew wonder, mount him upon a horse or ass, and clap patient Grizzel upon a pillion behind him; or, if you please, put them both into a gig or tandem, or any other carriage mentioned on those tiresome boards with which toll-gates are adorned, and send them off on a jaunt to Melrose, Loch Catrine, St. Andrews, or the Falls of Clyde. You would find, perhaps, ere they had got half-way, Job overturned, and sitting once more upon a dunghill cursing himself, his wife, and all the world, but particularly Grizzel; while she—the jumbling having converted all her milk of human kindness into butter-milk or Corstorphine cream—returns flash for flash, and raves against her evil stars for having coupled her for ever so brief a period with such a rude, awkward, ill-tongued, ungovernable, ridiculous, ugly, old, bloody-minded rascal".

So he lived on in Edinburgh, a strange figure in dress of prehistoric cut and colour, making his house a very lumber-room of antiquity, and painfully etching his queer pictures, and penning his long letters to the old friends who had not died or forgotten him, and to the new ones whom his reputation as a wit and virtuoso, or, it may be, as his biographer says, some more endearing qualities, had made for him. His fondness for letter-writing had received a severe shock, when Lady Charlotte Bury published, in that book¹ which Thackeray made such wicked fun of, his early letters to her from Oxford, "silly impertinent" letters, he calls them, and moreover made still worse, as he always declared, by her alterations. If the

¹ "A Diary of the Times of George the Fourth," 1838. It must be added that Sharpe has been allowed an ample, though late revenge. One of his marginal notes on this book, printed by Mr. Bedford, asserts its author to have been the heroine of Mat Lewis's "Monk"!

dead are in a position to concern themselves with the literature of the living, we do not feel sure that he would regard the present publication with perfect equanimity. The editors profess to have been more desirous of exhibiting him as a man of letters and a critic than as "the mere *dilettante* correspondent of idle seekers of ephemeral rumour"; we have seen how he looks in the former light, but it must be owned that he is not invisible in the latter. "Strange," wrote Sir Walter in his journal, "that a man should be curious after scandal of centuries old!", though he added this significant comment, that "Charles loves it fresh and fresh also". However, none of it can do harm to any one now, and much of it is certainly amusing enough, besides really adding some living touches to those pictures of the past most of us are fond at some time of trying to compose. What a queer notion, for example, do we get of the manners of Scottish society in the latter half of the last century from his note to Robert Chambers on a chapter in the "Traditions of Edinburgh". "My father, who knew these young gentlewomen well, told me that the first time he ever saw the Duchess of Gordon, she was riding astride upon a sow in the High Street, and Lady Wallace thumping it on with a stick". Elsewhere, in a letter to Sir Walter, we find Sharpe writing that he can remember some "now very fine Scotch ladies who used to seud about without stockings when they were past fifteen". We learn, too, that the female appetite for the horrors of the law-courts is by no means a growth of the present age: in 1823, Lady Gwydyr writes to tell him that two of her friends had been to hear the trial of Thurtell for the murder of Weare, and had taken their little girls with them! It seems, moreover, that Sharpe himself was not exempt from these frailties. There is a letter from one Robert Seton in the Lawnmarket of Edinburgh offering him and Scott the share of a window from which to watch the exe-

cution of the murderer Burke; but that the offer was accepted, there is no showing. Then we get a glimpse of another trial where the sensation was at least of a more decent kind, the trial for malversation from which Lord Melville was acquitted in 1806, the very year in which "the monster Fox" died. "I went three days to Melville's trial", Sharpe writes to his mother from Oxford in June.

"The first was taken up, as the newspapers would tell you, by Whitbread's speech, who declaimed in a velvet coat, a bag, and laced ruffles. You would have laughed had you seen the sedulous care with which his friends gave him sips of wine-and-water to wet his whistle, and cloths for his mouth and nose. I thought his speech very clear, but in a miserable bad taste; and so abusive that Lord Melville smiled very frequently. That monster Fox was there, covered with a gray cloak,—in which, I suppose, Mrs. Arnostead formerly walked the streets,—his sallow cheeks hanging down to his paunch, and his scowling eyes turned sometimes on Mr. Whitbread, sometimes on the rows of pretty peeresses, who sat eating sandwiches from silk indispensables, and putting themselves in proper attitudes to astonish the representatives of the Commons of England occupying the opposite benches."

To such an uncompromising Tory as Sharpe, Fox was of course a monster of most hateful mien. Nevertheless he allows some merit to the history of James the Second, especially for its style, and cannot help regretting that "he spent that time in making forgotten (or nearly forgotten) speeches in Parliament, which would have been so much more usefully employed in perpetuating the purest idioms of his native language". He is surprised, he adds, to find how much Fox admired the Duke of Monmouth, "who was a bad son, a worse husband, *no father at all*, and a fool". But the whitewashing freaks of biographers were always an amusement to him, and we find him writing a few years later to his friend Lord Gower: "to what discoveries biographical may we not in time arrive, when the lapse of a few years hath shown us Richard the Third unhumped and bloodless, Monmouth wise, Lord Argyll great, and

John Knox a courtly fine gentleman!".

But the most notable figure that these volumes bring before us, and the one which will really give Sharpe such interest as he may be found to have for the present generation, is the figure of Sir Walter Scott. There are upwards of fifty letters from him, the most of which are now for the first time printed,—a rare treasure indeed for any book in these days!—and many delightful and characteristic touches do they enable us to add to our knowledge of that great man. Here, for instance, is a whimsical picture of Abbotsford.

"I have persuaded myself that you will find yourself quite at home in my new Flibbertigibbet of a house, because it will suit none but an antiquary. One gable-end is surmounted by a cross from the old church at Loudoun, another by the Scottish thistle which frowned over one of the windows of the Tolbooth; so I stand *pro aris et focis* between the emblems of the kirk and the country. Then I have got a cleugh (which I call a glen). Item, the butt-end of a Roman camp covered with broom, the rest untraceable. Item, three Roman roads, two of them in bad order. Item, a pair of Roman forceps, by the vulgar called tongs, sorely damaged with rust. Item, Rob Roy's *sporran* or purse, which no one can find the means of opening."

And here we have it again from another point of view.

"Abbotsford—time, seven o'clock—Without, six drowned dogs, ponies, and pages,—voices of Charles and Walter going to the muirs. I hope they take an engine of the Humane Society with them. My bailiff, with a chin of uncommon length, come to say the corn is all laid, my gardener knitting a noose to hang himself, the bark on which I reckon for 50£. drowned, and will be presently reputed not worth ten. And all this I am exchanging for the quiet of Auld Reekie, where you could shut out a rainy day, and only guessed it by the umbrellas that passed the window. I don't know how it will answer. But we stick ourselves into queer situations."

At one time we find him excusing a short letter on the plea that his eyes are weak, "having ridden through Yarrow and Moffat dales to Drumlanrig in a blue bonnet with never a brim to it"; at another we catch a glimpse of his son Walter, "come from

sketching in Kent—black as the devil, except a large pair of light grey eyes".

We hear but little of the novels, or indeed of any of his works. He was more wont to write to his friends on their business than on his own. Of his misfortunes there is not a trace. Indeed one of the very few allusions to himself is contained in these few lines: "I am thinking of quitting the Court of Session if the economy of Ministers will leave me enough to live upon. I was yesterday sixty, no great age, but I have been pretty hard worked. One of the greatest losses I shall have is not seeing you". In the same letter, the last but one Sharpe was to receive from him, occurs a passage concerning "Kenilworth", which we shall transcribe for the benefit of Canon Jackson, who has been so scandalized with the libels on blameless men to be found in that wicked perversion of history.

"A thousand thanks for the illustrations of Kenilworth. I have only to fear they have come too late, for we stereotype far in advance of publication to secure punctuality. But whether I can avail myself of them or not at this impression, I will certainly do so on the next occasion that offers. My present illustrations are taken from Ashmole's Berkshire, where I see that Tony Foster, whom I have made a sullen Puritan clown, is described, on tombstone at least, as a scholar, musician, and gay man. But to lie like a tombstone is as good a proverb as to lie like a bulletin, and good folks will think I have done him a favour, who have left him his grim and solid vice of murder, without charging him with any of those peccadilloes which are the small change of vice, diceing, drinking and playing at cards. *So transeat cum ceteris erroribus*".

It is curious to find Scott, of all men, accused of dilatoriness in his work. Mrs. Smollett, Sharpe's aunt, writes to tell him that she hears the press has been stopped in the printing of "Rokeby" because no more manuscript was forthcoming: "It is curious", adds the old lady, "his being so dilatory". When we remember Lockhart's account of the circumstances in which the poem was composed, with carpenters hammering and children Prattling all round the author's desk, one wonders rather

that it was ever brought to an end at all.

The mention of this poem reminds us of a most singular instance of two wits jumping alike, neither of whom can well be called great. Every reader of Lockhart's book will remember Scott's delightful story of his encountering, on the way to Rokeby, in the person of a grave medical practitioner in some small country town, one John Lundie whom he had formerly known as a blacksmith and horse-doctor in the neighbourhood of Ashiestiel. "But John", he asked in amazement, "do you never happen to kill any of your patients?" "Kill? Ou ay, may be sae! Whiles they die, and whiles no; but it's the will o' Providence. *Onyhow, your honour, it wad be long before it makes up for Flodden!*" This same jest was anticipated nearly two centuries earlier by no less a person than Sir Robert Grierson of Lag, the notorious persecutor of the Covenanters, so many of whose offences have been laid on the shoulders of Claverhouse. Sir Robert sent one of his sons to practise as an apothecary in Carlisle, dismissing him with these words: "God speed ye! Ye'll revenge the fecht at Flodden!"¹ It would be interesting to

Lag was, as has been said, one of Sharpe's ancestors, and this story is told by his descendant in some manuscript notes to a volume of letters from Lag and Andrew Crosbie, the Jacobite Provost of Dumfries, another ancestor.

know whether John was knowingly repeating an old Border jest, or whistling on his own wits.

It was to Sharpe that Sir Walter addressed one of the last and most touching of his letters, the one written from Abbotsford just before starting on that fruitless journey to the Mediterranean. Often as it has been read, none will refuse to read it once more.

"MY DEAR CHARLES,—I pray you to honour with your acceptance the last number of Mr. Harding's 'Illustrious Persons.' My best thanks to you for the genealogy, which completes a curious subject. I am just setting off for the Mediterranean, a singular instance of a change of luck; for I have no sooner put my damaged fortune into as good a condition as I could desire, than my health, which till now has been excellent, has failed so utterly in point of strength, that while it will not allow me to amuse myself by travelling, neither will it permit me to stay at home. I should like to have shaken hands with you, as there are few I regret so much to part with. But it will not be. I will keep my eyes dry if possible, and therefore content myself with bidding you a long, perhaps an eternal farewell. But I may find my way home again improved, as a Dutch skipper from a whale fishery. I am only happy that I am like to see Malta. Always yours, well or ill,

"WALTER SCOTT."

This letter is Sharpe's best epitaph. The man, of whom Sir Walter Scott could take his last leave in such words, must have been something more and better than these volumes are, in truth, able to show us.

ON THE MARCH FOR MARATHON.

In the days of Pericles, or thereabouts, a certain philosopher of the Peripatetic school made a pet of a goose, and the goose followed him wherever he went. Whether he sat at home or walked to and fro along the banks of the trickling Ilissus, deeply engrossed in philosophical musings or in disputations with his disciples, he was always attended by his goose. If it be true that a man is known by the company he keeps, it is a pity that Aristophanes did not make something out of this wise man and his inseparable associate.

There is a similar suspicion of the irony of Fate in the constant and stentorian braying of the many asses which live and work in modern Athens. Of course an ass of the East is a very different animal from the unhappy creature which exists in the teeth of endless ridicule and oppression in old England. It is by no means aware of its inferiority to any other inhabitant of the earth, and there is even a tincture of naughty conceit in the way in which it will stretch forth its head, expand its nostrils, and, with tail almost stiffly horizontal, sound blast after blast fit to crack the ears of a stranger. Nevertheless it is a mere ass ; and it was by one of these full-lunged Athenian asses that I was awoke early on a certain Easter Saturday. But for this particular bray I should never have seen Marathon. Therefore, I am grateful to the ass.

A new railway running through Attica in a north-easterly direction some twelve miles on the way to Marathon was to be opened that day. I determined that it should be due to no weak-kneed scruples if I did not contrive to walk the twenty-five miles representing the double distance be-

tween Cephisia and Marathon, and be in Athens again in the evening, in time for the midnight festivities of the city preliminary to the dawn of Easter.

Hurrying through the streets of Athens that morning, one saw glad signs that the rigid fast of *Sarakosté* (Lent) was all but at an end. Early as it was, flocks of bleating sheep and lambs were huddled together in the sideways and corners, under the charge of shepherds of the old school, with kerchiefed heads, bare legs, great crooks, and long knives in their girdles. And shrewd Athenian householders were already at this or that lamb, testing its weight and qualities, or huckstering about its price, in preparation for the evening. On the morrow, all the back streets north of the Acropolis will be redolent of roast meat, and young Athenian boys and girls will be seen hastening in joyous troops from the public bakeries with the crisp joints or baked pies of the Paschal feast.

Other signs of the times were to be observed. During the night new proclamations had been pasted upon the walls of the public buildings of the city. "Awake, Athenians! be men! Shall the Turkish beasts be permitted to despoil your country of her own? Have no fear of the Great Powers. They mean us no evil. It is a demonstration—a show-off: nothing more. But if, perchance, these bullies of the West should attempt to coerce the descendants of Themistocles, Leonidas, and the rest, then arm yourselves, O Greeks, remember your forefathers, and let Heaven arbitrate between us!" Such was the style of these flatulent manifestoes; and they were being perused in proud silence by knots of gaping children, Greek gen-

tlemen in frock coats and tall hats, martial Albanians in short white skirts (starched stiffly from their bodies) and large shoes with turned-up toes, and husbandmen from the suburbs in blue blouses and breeches, who had come into the city with their arms full of lettuces and radishes.

" Soldiers! soldiers!" shouted a dark-eyed child, breaking from the throng. In that instant, a bugle sounded, and a troop of young recruits, the latest levy, was seen marching across the street towards the new railway-station.

" Yes—they are going to Marathona, on their way to the frontier, noble fellows, to shed their blood for their country!" remarked a bystander, with flashing eyes; and the warriors were watched until they were out of sight, with many a sigh and hum of tender admiration. A few minutes later, and I was struggling in the midst of these noisy young soldiers for a place at the ticket-office, in the middle of the road whence the new railway made its start.

The weather was not at all ideal Greek weather. Heavy rain-clouds brooded over the mountains which fence the fertile plain of Athens: from Hymettus towards the south to Parnes in the north, and the farther we left the Acropolis and dusky Salamis behind us, the gloomier was the outlook. But it would certainly make walking the easier. And the reddish soil of the vineyards through which we sped looked dry and thirsty enough for the absorption of all the rain the clouds could pour down. Yet, even in spite of the sunlessness, there was a charm about the country that cheered one's heart like a spiritual cordial. No one can soon forget Greece who sees it in spring, when its vineyards, grain-fields, and olive-orchards are scarlet with mighty poppies, and its asphodels, many-coloured anemones, and countless other flowers, star the plains in all directions.

The first station, Heracleon, was typical of the others. It was a neat

little building, gabled and tiled, with a pretty flower-garden not unlike those of England where it is the master's pride and pleasure to enamel in geraniums and calceolarias the name of his small dwelling-place. And at each station the dapper guard in new uniform left the new train and shook hands heartily with the local representative of the company, who himself wore an excited face and clothes that knew neither crease nor blemish. Throughout the journey, moreover, the warriors bound for Marathon sang songs with a rhythm of which the erratic rises and falls of sound again and again defeated all expectation. Notwithstanding the dulness of the weather, therefore, our progress was festive. Estimating a man by the cost of his ticket, the train carried about seven hundred drachmas' (a drachma was then valued rather under eightpence) worth of passengers: so said the guard in a moment of confidence, and it did not seem a bad beginning.

One more faint scream from our small engine and we were at Cephisia. The line goes no further at present, though some day it will doubtless be carried on to Marathon, with a junction for Thebes and Thermopyle.

A very charming spot is this Cephisia! Its wine is still famous, and as a country resort it has held the esteem of Athens for centuries. Sheltered under a grove of prodigious plane-trees, its gay villas, Byzantine rather than classical, flash purple and crimson and yellow through the green foliage; each of them standing in a garden where oranges and lemons, figs and grapes, ripen side by side with pears and other fruits of the north. Clear cold water flows down its shaded streets from one of the sources of the Cephissus which springs from the rock within a few minutes' walk of the village, and runs through Athens towards the sea. "Nymphs of Cephisia streams," sang Pindar. Nowadays, alas, the only nymphs of the stream are the brawny and mahogany-coloured washerwomen who beat the clothes

with its big pebbles, and inspire little or no poetry.

"Respected sir," said the affable guard of the train, when I asked him to give me the bearings of Marathon from the railway-station, "it is a long way without a horse. The road is rough. For two hours there is hardly any road at all, and the country has few people. Suppose you lose yourself, what then?" This proposition seemed so piquant that he called to the station-master, and echoed his "What then?" On prudential grounds, both the officials were strongly against the walk.

But they were not to have it all their own way. A sturdy peasant in jack-boots, passing by, put in his ear, "For Marathona? so am I;" and with a nod of agreement our compact of comradeship was settled off-hand. He was a heavy-browed man of muscular build, with a countenance which the hardships of existence had marked without mercy; and he was weighted with vexatious burdens of different kinds. But though on acquaintance he proved to be as dull-witted as one might expect from the conditions of an agriculturist's life in Greece, he had good qualities like the best of us. I offered to relieve him of some of his load, but he would not hear of it. The things were his, why should I be troubled with them? Besides, he was used to carrying weights; did not his bent back show that sufficiently? And the poor fellow slapped his shoulder to point his words.

Without more ado, we twain then walked into the village and to the first of the coffee-houses. Here I drank my friend's health in coffee, and with sober politeness he retorted upon me with the customary Easter salutation, "A good resurrection to you."

Similar interchanges of courtesies were going on in another part of the room, where band of the soldiers were hobnobbing with certain of their friends who had bivouacked in Cephisia during the night. They were drinking raki, while the swart innkeeper, his

wife, and a boy were hastily chopping up lettuces and onions, and mixing them with olives and oil and vinegar for a grand salad. A Greek salad is one of the few gastronomical pleasures of life in Greece during *Surakosté*. Snails are another of these Lenten luxuries. A guest was enjoying a plateful of the latter dainties. He picked them from their speckled shells with a bent pin, and ate so fast that the empty shells clattering upon the ground made incessant noise. Snails and salad, with half a pint of native wine, compose a meal perfect in the eyes of a frugal Greek. To a stranger the snails are not inviting, but still, eaten stoically, they are at least tolerable, and with a white sauce they may even be termed palatable. Of the *resinata*, or native wine, something ought also to be said. At the outset it is as bad as an average bottle of physic; but habit makes it, like the snails, endurable. Its name gives the key to its peculiarity. One might as well drink a decoction of turpentine, so strong is the resinous taste and so feeble the flavour of the grape. The truth is that the Greeks infuse the cones of the fir-trees in their wine-vats, the better to preserve their wines. However, this *resinata* has the recommendation of being medicinal; a dyspeptic, for instance, is said to be sure of a cure if he persist in it for some weeks.

But it is time for us to proceed, especially as there is a break in the sky, and the sun of Greece, even in April, is not to be faced for hours at a time with impunity.

Mount Pentelicus is joined to the yet higher range of Parnes by an upland ridge for the most part of naked rock, from the herbs and flowers of which the bees take their honey to Hymettus. On the southern side of the ridge is Cephisia, on the northern is Marathon. Our route therefore was one of gradual ascent for about three hours, with the peak of Pentelicus, now clear from clouds, immediately on the right hand, and the plain of

Attica, an appalling purple black to the eye, stretching far and wide below us on the left hand. For miles no house was visible in the plain. It presented a gloomy expanse of scrub, occasionally broken with big stones and stunted fir-trees. Streams there were none to be seen; though clefts in the red or pebbly earth betokened that in the rainy season the plain has a superfluity of water.

My guide tried to excuse the desolate appearance of his country. "It is not so poor," he said. "See the lentisk all about? Well, they get the raki from that, and the raki is a fine spirit. From the firs, too, we get much resin. Then there are the flowers everywhere; you can't go anywhere without seeing them! And what should we do for honey if we had not got the flowers? And you say there are few houses—well, that is true, but see yonder [and he pointed to a square white blot in the woods at the foot of Parnes], that is a fine house. It is a barrack, and there are hundreds of soldiers there. And at Stamata, where I live, on the way to Marathona, there are many remarkable buildings; while as for Marathona, it is a large city. It has one hundred and fifty habitations, and its land is very good. I remember when it was not safe for a stranger like you to come so far from Athens; but now—bah! you may travel from the sea to the frontier, and you will meet with no harm, except a fever."

We had not gone far on our way when the shouting behind told us that the soldiers for Marathon were afoot. They came on in knots, frolicking and teasing one another like children. Each carried his knapsack, a heavy blue overcoat, and a gun; and yet their pace through the sandy tracks of the bracing plateau was a good four miles an hour. They were the most inquisitive and good-humoured of fellows. No sooner had one batch of them had their curiosity satisfied as to my nationality, the time according to my watch, my name, purpose in visiting Marathon,

and the year of my birth, than another batch came upon us with like inquiries. It became tedious at length, and I recurred to my imagination for some relief; and then in a body they fell upon us with roars of laughter, and upbraided me for my mendaciousness. As for my guide, he was averse to soldiers. After a time he could stand their society no longer: "Will you go with them or me?" he asked. And when it was settled that I stayed with him, we sat down in a tiny dingle of arbutus and oleanders, and, pleading fatigue, let the others go on their own merry way by themselves.

The soldiers were no sooner out of sight than my Greek unstrapped a prodigious circular wooden case from his side, and unscrewed the top of it. "Good wine," he said; and with this (*resinata* of the most patriotic vintage), some lettuces, and a handful of leaves, we made a capital luncheon. No indigestion after such a meal, believe me; and it was with a sigh that the man rehitched his case and got upon his legs. His portable wine-butt weighed about eight pounds *avoirdupois* empty, and it held three okes, or another eight pounds weight of wine. Yet he was bound round with other encumbrances at least as heavy as his wine-cellars. Small marvel that the poor fellow expressed pleasure when we entered an extensive olive-orchard which was to terminate in Stamata.

"You shall eat again when we get there—in my own house too," he observed; and it was futile for me to insist that my appetite ought to be restrained until I reached Marathon.

Epano Stamata, the one village between Cephisia and the battlefield, is a pretty place. Its name indicates that it stands on an eminence, or root of a mountain. It looks full at the steepest side of Pentelicus, half way up which is the huge white gash of the marble quarries, dazzling like snow under the sunlight. Olives, grain, and vineyards give colour to the intervening country, and the uncultivated lands are dense with dwarf holly,

arbutus, and lentisk, interspersed with firs. But in no particular does the village itself invite a visitor to stay in it. It boasts of one tall brick building, which my guide had spoken of as a palace for splendour of architecture: this is a powder magazine, and therefore neither a desirable nor a possible place of sojourn. There is also a white church and a wine-shop. A dozen or more other humble houses compose the village itself; and of these my friend's abode was a fair example.

A squat hut, of mud walls and thatched roof, entered at discretion over a dung-heap or through a pigsty, and divided into two rooms—such was the peasant's dwelling. And in the larger of the two rooms, with the native earth for floor, and two or three blackened rafters offering the chief convenience for stowage of the various provisions of the establishment, I was received by the wife of my man with a wondering, "Good resurrection to you." She seemed hardly human, this woman, with her long black hair hanging over her rags behind, and the gaze of an animal in her large, unblenching brown eyes. A few sharp words from her lord, however, soon set her in intelligent movement. Their boy, with a head like an Esquimaux's, who had watched the stranger with the same dumb surprise as his mother, was sent to the wine-shop for some fresh *resinata*. A little pig, hitherto unnoticed in one corner of the room, was chased, squealing, into its sty. Cocks and hens followed the pig. A roll of frowsy matting, on which sundry of the fowls had been tranquilly roosting, was briskly spread on the floor, and another brought forward to serve as a seat. And lastly, with some amiable, but incomprehensible, mutterings, the good soul fetched a lump of brown bread from a shelf under a little blue and white Madonna in another corner of the room, and a paper of rather ancient *mizethra* (cream cheese), which she placed by the side of the bread.

"It is your dinner," said the man demurely; and the two of them squatted

on a third piece of matting on the other side of the hearth, and looked at their guest.

"Ba! Ba!" at that instant came from a remoter corner of the room, and there, tied fast to an olive bough in the midst of lesser twigs of trees for fuel, stood the Paschal lamb of the family, awaiting the hour for its slaughter. It were an impoverished house in Greece that had not its lamb that day; and these peasants were delighted to draw attention to theirs.

"Is it not a fine one?" said the woman. "It is very large for its age, and it is large with fat, not wool."

"And only seven and a half drachmas [between five and six shillings] altogether," added the man.

"Look here, too!" exclaimed the woman, jumping to her feet, and going to a rude cupboard. Thence she drew forth a basin full of pink eggs "for-morrow," and two flat brown circular cakes studded with pink sugar-plums and almonds. "With these and the lamb and some good *resinata* it will go well with us," she remarked; and even the hard features of the peasant himself relaxed into a smile as he looked at the rich provision they had made for Easter, and began already to enjoy them in anticipation.

When the boy returned with a jug of wine and a new loaf, we began our meal. But its poverty seemed to disquiet the woman, and after a word with her husband, and a furtive glance at the Madonna in the corner, she took one of the red eggs from the cupboard, and, cracking it on her knee-cap, removed its shell.

"For you," she said; and her look of elation almost transfigured her. The egg, be it understood, was hard boiled: it had probably been in the pot long ago.

The boy, meanwhile, stood like one who had seen a miracle; perhaps he expected the house to collapse, as a punishment for this infringement of Lenten rules and ordinances. Not all the arguments of words and gestures

imaginable could induce one of the others to eat an egg with me. "No, no. It is different with you. Our papas [priests] are not your papas," they said; and then they fell to wishing me and each other "happy resurrections" with every sip from their cups of wine.

When the jug was empty, I proposed to go on towards Marathon without further delay. Under the direction of my friend, I thought there would be no difficulty about finding the way. But both man and woman forthwith laughed to scorn the idea that I could safely walk the remaining seven miles unaided. The wine had got into their heads, I fancy: for in no other way could the demoniacal behaviour of the woman be explained. She stood with her lean brown arms outstretched from her rags, and her eyes seemingly enlarged to twice their natural size; and thus by hideous pantomime, moans, and contortions, signified all sorts of disasters with which, as a stranger in a strange land, I might be menaced if I proceeded alone.

"She is right, I will come," said the man, after a little thought. He took an axe from one of the rafters, drew his finger down its edge, and then looked with brief impressiveness at the woman. I pressed some money upon the latter, who was wholly averse to receiving it at first, and was seconded in this by her husband. In the end, however, saying, "It must be little, then," she accepted the coins, and with a promise of seeing her again later in the day, I departed.

For a while we swung lightly through some narrow meadows between beautiful hanging woods. There was a brook in the valley, and kine stood knee-deep in the water under the burning sun. From the lowlands we turned abruptly, and began through rising scrub a climb which was not ended until, about an hour later, we stood on the highest northern spur of Pentelicus, where this falls towards the Straits of Eubœa and the houses of Marathon.

It was not until he had led me to the head of a gorge from which Marathon was in view, that my good friend said a word about returning and leaving me to my fate. Then, with a dry, "There it is—this Marathona," he held out his hand for a grip of farewell, and turned on his heel.

The descent over the sharp-edged rocks into the valley is a quick, though laborious one; and soon the wide blanched river-bed of the Charadrus meets the eye, where it issues from another gorge on its way to Marathon. On the banks of the river are green pastures, and ere long I was in the midst of a flock of long-horned goats, who seemed very curious about the intruder.

But in Greece goats or sheep imply dogs almost as certainly as shepherds, and whoever understands the classical pedigree of the Greek dogs will know that they are a ferocious race of animals, and brave as ferocious. To the eye they are a cross between a mastiff and a colley; but in reality they are a pure breed of their own—the Molossian of old times. Even in the neighbourhood of Athens, where strangers are as common as stones, one of these dogs in charge of its flock will dash at an intruder with all its fangs ready, and, unless opposed with a pluck as convincing as its own, will fasten its teeth somewhere. And in the country, where the shepherd places all reliance upon the fierceness and loyalty of his dog, which he will therefore never curb in the least degree, and where, as often as not, the shepherd goes to sleep in a shady nook, or wanders afield with his gun in quest of game, leaving the dog as his responsible deputy, it is still worse for the stranger. More than once a brace of these gigantic yellow brutes have torn a man in pieces; and they will make a few wolves turn tail without any trouble. No wonder therefore that many a tourist is frightened into a change of plans when he hears of the Greek dogs, and that it is

considered unwise to indulge in pedestrianism unaccompanied by a thick stick and a determination to use it, if need be.

Happily, I had a stick, and happily, no less, the dog on this occasion was on the other side of the river. From an eminence he barked and growled unpleasantly; but either he was no friend to the water, or else he was lazy, for he contented himself with watching my movements until I had left the last of his goats behind me. By that time I was close upon the village of Marathon, and already treading upon its cultivated lands. A little further, and the temptation to sit and smoke a while on the river-bank, and make what I could of the place, was not to be resisted.

With the flashing of the water of the Charadrus in the foreground, and its white houses and stately cypresses in soft relief against the grey background of its northern hills, Marathon was very picturesque and pleasing under the hot noonday sun and cloudless sky. "The splendid Marathon" of Pindar, or Byron's "grey Marathon," was to-day rather Marathon the bright and peaceful. At a little distance, the sunlight on the exact squares of brown and green land in cultivation gave it the appearance of a comfortable model farm on a large scale; but nearing the village, these fields were lost in its more elevated houses, and the fig, pear, and olive trees which surrounded them. It is uncertain whether the Marathon of to-day was the Marathon of twenty-three and a half centuries ago. Probably it was not. The village of Vrana, more to the south and nearer the sea, and nearer also to the mound which, with considerable excuse, has long received veneration as the tomb of the Athenians who fell in the fight, is equally a village of the plain of Marathon, though not so large as Marathona. But Marathona proper at once appeals to the fancy. Its situation, at the head of a gully opening inland from the sea-plain and

dominated on all other sides by treeless hills, is romantic. These hills, however, are not impassable. They are neither high nor rugged, but at the same time they are difficult, because of their stoniness and the thickets of low herbs which crop from their fine rounded humps. And looking from the houses seaward one is, as it were, looking through a cutting three to four miles long, the hills on either side being at the same angle of elevation. Over the hither slopes, to the south of the valley, peers the grey summit of Pentelicus, a superb vantage-post for a beacon. From this grey peak, looming in the distance like something super-terrestrial, it is supposed that the Athenian friends of the Persians signalled, by means of a polished shield to catch the sun, that the city was open to the invaders, if they would but sail round the headland of Sunium without loss of time: Miltiades and the other leaders of the tribes being in the hills on their foolish way to Marathon. But the signal was too late, for Miltiades had by that time left the hills, and beaten the Persians. Moreover, he as well as the Persians saw the shield flash in the sunlight, and understood its portent as well as they. So that, when the Persians rounded the cape, thinking to take Athens by surprise, these victors of Marathon had accomplished their forced march back to the city, and were there once more as its defenders. It is an important feature in Greek history—this crest of Pentelicus looking over at Marathon.

I had not half smoked my cigar when the church bells of the village began to ring out quickly. In a twinkling, the tranquillity of Marathon was gone. Dogs that I had been watching with no friendly eye started from the doorways wherein they had been reposing, stretched themselves, and barked in the snappish way that indicates a tendency to ill-humour. The omnipresent, vociferous Greek donkeys brayed and brayed again: cocks crowed; even the very birds seemed

to be aroused from their siesta, and their uncertain twittering came across the river, made somewhat inharmonious by the gabble of the Marathonian geese in the water at my feet. But louder than all other sounds, or at least more appealing, came the passionate bleat of many lambs tethered to the houses. It was as though they understood that this ringing of the bell, announcing the eve of Easter, was also the signal for their death.

This turmoil set me in movement again. It was necessary to ford the river to reach the village, which is wholly on the other side of the water. Half a mile nearer the sea there is a bridge, but the natives do not use it much except in the rainy season. Men, women, and children go bravely, bare-legged, through the flood. But a first glance at the state of the stream made me pause before going into it. Not only was there much water that day, and running swiftly, so that not many of its boulders, parched and white, stood outside its current; but every stone was massed with myriads of tadpoles, and the river-bed was darkened by the soft, gelatinous swarms. The *Charadrus* teemed with young life. Noticing my hesitation, a couple of stout Greek dames on the other bank seemed to make an offer of transport upon their broad backs. But this was not to be thought of, and ere long I was seated by them, putting on my boots again. Some Albanians, whose feminine skirts were peculiarly adapted for the fording of rivers, went to and fro carrying fresh lambs into the village from a country sheep-fold. I determined that my stay in Marathon should be very brief: it would be too appalling to hear these plaintive bleatings end in wails and melancholy silence. They should kill their lambs when I was out of the village.

Of the sandy plain of Marathon, what can one say that has not been said often before? Such places do not undergo much change. The marsh of centuries ago is the marsh of to-

day, and the treeless space which offered such good ground for the attack of the Athenians in their extraordinary charge down from the heights upon the astounded Asiatics, is still a treeless space. From the firm beach one looks over the rippling *Ægean* towards Eubœa, and tries to represent to one's self the bustle attendant upon the stranding here of many hundred Persian ships, and the noisy landing of the scores of thousands of Persian soldiers, already victors in Eubœa, with the prospect before them of the sack of that proud little city of Athens, which had dared to communicate on equal terms with the great Darius. Under the big mound of soil, some thirty feet in height and a couple of hundred paces in circumference, overgrown, like the hills round the plain, with wiry herbs and blood-red poppies, are the Athenians who died in this famous fight, a hundred and ninety-two of them! From a bush on the crest of it one looks out upon the placid sea, the distant mountains of Eubœa, and round about at the bleak hills which are a sarcophagus to the tomb itself.

“The sun, the soil . . . the same;
Unchanged in all. . . .”

Of course however there are those who discredit this mound of Marathon. It is a prehistoric tumulus, they say, and has nothing to do with the Athenians. Is it likely, they ask, that men would raise a miniature mountain like this over the dead bodies of one hundred and ninety-two of their comrades? Besides, the arrow-heads and knives of obsidian found in this tumulus are antecedent to the era of the battle. As if four-and-twenty centuries ago was not an epoch sufficiently pre-historic in itself! Some of the Athenians may have sat on the mound to bandage their wounded legs or arms, or to recover breath; or may have wrestled with certain Persians who met them there in full panoply; but no Athenian ever lay under its stones. Well, it may be so.

But destructive criticism, however sound, will not readily prevail over sentiment. For years yet to come, without a doubt, affecting thoughts will be conceived on this mound, and men will here be lured into salutary self-forgetfulness.

The plain extends along the seashore towards a sharp headland which forms the northern boundary of its bay. It is some six miles long, including its marshes, and about two broad. When Byron visited Marathon, the battle-field was for sale, and he was offered all its square miles for eight or nine hundred pounds sterling. This was certainly a good bargain, and one may regret that the poet did not buy the land and settle for a while in the midst of its associations. It might have been his redemption in those earlier days, when the chief of the black eunuchs was proprietor of Athens, and Chateaubriand never tired of bemoaning the state of Greece: "What a desert! What silence! Unfortunate country! Unhappy Greeks! Shall France one day be stripped in like manner of her glory?"

But the memories of Marathon almost put me in a disagreeable predicament. Looking at my watch, I found that I had but four hours for my walk back into Cephisia for the last train. The descent into the plain had been a rugged one; but it promised to be arduous indeed as an ascent.

And so in effect it turned out to be. At the head of the gorge I lost my way, and found myself stumbling among the stems of the brushwood, on a track that eventually led in a direction away from the nose of old Pentelicus, instead of straight towards

it. There was nothing to do except to return and try again. Nor was this easy, even by the guidance of the most recent recollections. So that it seemed for a while that I should have to choose as cosy a nest in the shrubs as possible until the next morning. It was at this epoch in the day's excursion that I learned to bless those royster ing warriors who had started with us for Marathon. For, having at length struck again upon the main track, it seemed clear that there was no safety for a stranger except he could follow some indisputable trail through the Dædalian maze of paths and byways. And such a trail I found in the prints of the hobnails of the soldiers' boots, which led me without further misadventure back to Stamata.

From Stamata I hurried on through the clear and golden light of the spring evening, with all the mountains of Attica distinct before and behind me. Then, all too suddenly, down went the sun in the rear of gaunt Citheron. But by this time, fortunately, I had done with the hobnails of the soldiers' boots; the road was unmistakable again.

In all the six miles from Stamata to Cephisia, I passed but one mortal man; a sturdy rogue in many colours, with a long gun on his shoulder. He was no bandit; but it may be that his Easter dinner was to depend on his powder and shot. He said a hearty *Kali spera* (Good evening), and went on his way.

The ground was wet with dew, and the stars were bright ere I got into the train for Athens, with hardly a minute to spare.

CHARLES EDWARDES.

MAROONED.

CHAPTER I.

I RECEIVE A LETTER.

I RETURNED to my lodgings in London one night in June in the year eighteen hundred and something, and found a letter lying upon the table. It was from my cousin, Alexander Fraser, and was dated at Rio Janeiro. This was a man whom I had neither seen nor heard of for some years. We had been sent to sea as boys in the East India Company's service, and together had made three voyages in the same ship to Bombay; which in those ambling days of trade, when a four months' passage to the Bay of Bengal was considered a good run, meant a long and intimate association. Through the death of my dear mother I came into money enough to render me independent, and so I quitted old ocean after three years of seafaring. Fraser made a fourth voyage and I then lost sight of him. When later on I wrote to his sisters in the north of Scotland I was told he had left his ship at Bombay to accompany a tea-grower, who had been a passenger in the vessel, to his plantations. That was the last I heard of him. As I held his letter in my hand, memory recalled him as a fair, blue-eyed, bronzed young fellow, exceedingly good-looking, a very nimble and alert seaman, fitter for the navy indeed than for the tea-wagon service, full of spirit and resolution and extremely impulsive.

He wrote to the following effect: first of all, he said, he had heard of me and obtained my address from a friend of mine who had sailed a few months before for Lima, but whose ship had been obliged to put into Rio to repair some damage she had sustained in a heavy gale off Cape Agostino. He

had a long story to relate about his misfortunes in India, how he had been villainously deceived in the character of his associate and almost ruined by him, and how, as he had no wish to die of starvation, he had shipped as a foremast hand aboard a Yankee vessel from which he ran on her arrival at Pernambuco—where he fell in with a sugar-grower belonging to Rio, who offered him a good berth on his estate in the neighbourhood of that town. He had not been long settled when he made the acquaintance of a Mr. and Mrs. Grant, with whose only daughter, Aurelia, he immediately fell in love. Mr. Grant was a Scotchman who had married a Spanish lady of noble birth, and their daughter, Fraser went on to say, was the most majestic, stately, and beautiful woman that ever walked the earth. The parents consented to their betrothal, but objected to the marriage until Fraser was in a condition to support a wife in comfort. One night, very suddenly, Mrs. Grant died. Her husband, who adored her, found her dead at his side, and the shock was so great that both his health and his mind gave way. He declared that he could not support life in a town where every object which met his eye reminded him of his loss; and within a month of Mrs. Grant's death he broke up his home and sailed with Aurelia for England. Fraser added that folks at Rio spoke of Mr. Grant as a well-to-do man and talked of Aurelia as an heiress; but the truth came out when he was gone, and it was then understood that so far from being rich he had just contrived to come to a stand within a few fathoms of the brink of insolvency.

The lovers of course agreed to write by every ship. Fraser was cocksure of being able to support a wife before

another year had run out, and it was settled that he was to send for or fetch her at the expiration of the twelve-month, as there was not the least likelihood of Mr. Grant returning to Rio.

Eight months after the arrival of the girl in England the father died. She wrote to acquaint Fraser with her loss, and hinted quite enough to intimate that she was not only friendless in London, but in poverty. "And now," continued my cousin, "I want you, who were as a brother to me when we were together at sea, to stand me in a brother's stead again in about as trying and perplexing a passage as ever formed part of a man's life. The business I have charge of is so tender, it needs such cherishing, such persistent personal attention, that I am persuaded were I to let go of it to fetch Aurelia I should return to find myself bankrupt. The population of Rio comprises a great number of rogues, and though the people I employ are not worse than the rest, they are rascals nevertheless, and I make no doubt whatever that if I were to turn my back upon them for three months they would ruin me. Now, my dear Dick, this is what you will do for me: you will call upon Aurelia"—here came in the address—"advance whatever money she may require, engage a cabin for her in the next ship that sails for Rio, furnish her with all such delicacies and comforts as your seafaring experiences, backed by a fastidious appetite, will suggest, and then, all this being done, *accompany her yourself*. You start! But, my dear boy, you will do this! ay, indeed you will; for d'ye see, you *must*, Dick. You will need but glance at her to perceive instantaneously that she cannot be suffered to embark alone. And consider how happy it will make her, thrown as she must needs be into the company, not of *our* polished glittering species—the sparkling dandies of John Company—but of men with faces like walnut-shells, with voices hoarse and raw with hard drinking, whose language is thickened and stiffened with

horrid objectionable words—how happy, I say, it will make her to feel that she has the protection of her sweetheart's own cousin, a man of muscle and nerve, who can tell the toughest salt of them all where the flying-jibboom ends and how many gudgeons a liner's rudder hangs on! Consider the ease of mind that I shall enjoy through knowing that you are at her side. Consider again the prodigious delight it will give me to meet you—to thank you—to entertain you—to yarn with you over the past and hearken to the home news you will bring with you. No excuse, as you love me! You *must* come, d'ye see, Dick. Yes, you must absolutely accompany my poor lonely darling girl. You are an idle man, you know; your friend told me you were unmarried when he last saw you, and I have a right to believe, as I certainly hope, that you are single at this minute of reading my letter. The voyage is a pleasant one. Once clear of the Bay, 'tis no more than the pleasant fanning of the north-east trade wind, with a brief instructive halt on the equator for a glance at John Sharkee and the pretty little flying fishes, and then a delightful run to the noblest bit of scenery the wide world over. Reflect a little upon your health and you are sure to discover that a change of air will do you good. And name me an air sweeter than the ocean breeze! Besides, you were never in South America, and cannot therefore imagine the delights in store for you in the shape of the rivers, the mountains, the shining flowers and exquisite fruits of this grand continent, or at all events of that part of it to which I invite you."

And so the letter went on, terminating in a whole jumble of exhortations to me to come—to squire his sweetheart—to behold from the summit of the regal Corcovado the magnificent harbour, the sparkling city, the green country beyond afame with coloured growths. . . .

It was a letter to set me pacing the

room. The voyage was a considerable one ; and though I had gone to sea for love of ships when I was a boy, a very few months sufficed to break the spell, and I had long ceased, as I believed, to be sensible of any sort of oceanic influence. I sat down, filled a pipe, and entered into certain calculations. I reckoned that a tolerably true course to Rio from the Thames would come hard upon five thousand nautical miles, and as it was hopeless to expect that any British South American trader would average more than one hundred and fifty knots in the twenty-four hours, I judged that though all conditions should prove favourable, the outward passage alone would run me into five or six weeks. Then of course I should have to return, so that I must look upon the round voyage as promising me three solid months, at least, upon a bosom that had ceased to rock me for some years. The first movement of my mind was one of recoil ; but after turning the project over I got to think that, after all, the voyage would prove a complete and healthy change, inexpensive too, and much less troublesome than a trip across the Channel. Possibly the old instincts which had driven me to sea as a lad, and which I had thought dead long ago, lived still, and were now faintly stirring to sudden visions of frothing billows, of the small green moon shearing like a cannon-ball through the flying scud, of the star-touched swell rolling in dark folds silently, of the tropic shore that sweetens the warm breath of the languid breeze with the odours of spices and the perfume of a nameless vegetation. London was hot and dull ; the seaside tedious and commonplace. My excursions abroad formed no genial memories, for in — I nearly died of fever at Brussels, and in — lay ill of a poisonous smell for close upon a month at Florence. Besides, my cousin pleaded to me as a brother and a sailor, and I knew him well enough to feel certain that if he were in my place he would do me this service.

But what sort of a girl was this Miss Aurelia Grant ? My cousin expressed her perfections in the impassioned language of love, and he might possibly be very right in all he said ; but I remember a man who had passed some years in Spain and who knew the Spanish character well, telling me that he took particular notice there was a deal of the mule mixed up in the disposition of the women of that country —a quality, as he described it, of bland and even polite obstinacy, that was, however, very easily excited into a most unpleasant, clamorous, peevish stubbornness. Miss Aurelia was indeed half English ; but suppose the other half of her was not to my taste ? I do protest on my word that I would rather go to jail for a fortnight than be locked up in a ship for a month with a disagreeable woman. Thus I sat debating ; but though I was some distance on the road towards forming a resolution, I cannot say that I had at all made up my mind when I went to bed.

CHAPTER II.

MISS AURELIA GRANT.

NEXT morning I dressed myself with more care than I usually took in this way, though twenty-six years old and not without self-complacency in some respects, and about eleven o'clock drove to the address given me by Fraser.

I found the house in a dull and dingy street out of the Edgware Road. Miss Grant was at home. I sent up my name, and was shown into a little front parlour, gloomy with sallow drapery and the bilious atmosphere peculiar to this part of the metropolis. In a few minutes she entered, and I must confess I sprang rather than rose to my feet, so surprised was I by the girl's beauty and deportment. I had indeed conjectured a tall figure in conformity with my cousin's description ; but imagination had not gone beyond that, with a pair of dark eyes and an upper lip shaded with down.

Now Miss Aurelia Grant had as fair

and delicate a complexion as any that ever I witnessed in the most matchless Englishwoman's face. Her hair was brown, very plentiful, thick and soft, and it had a kind of light of its own upon it as though dusted with gold. Her eyes were black—profoundly so: Spanish eyes in passion and power and meaning, but subdued to an expression of beauty by, as I took it, the English heart in her, that rendered them remarkable beyond my capacity of expression. Her figure was extremely fine, full yet girlish too. She was dressed in mourning, and as she stood looking at me a moment or two in the doorway, I said to myself, This is the handsomest creature I have ever seen!

There was a little blush on her cheeks that brightened the light in her eyes: she smiled and gave me her hand.

"I am indeed glad to see you, Mr. Musgrave. Alexander has talked of you to me again and again. In a letter I received from him yesterday he told me you would call. You are very good to come so soon."

"I shall be truly rejoiced if I can be of service to you," said I, still a trifle confused; "my cousin's description of you—eloquent as his devotion would naturally make him"—here I fumbled for the letter,—"would—perhaps, madam" (we madam'd the ladies in those days of high coat-collars, splendid waistcoats and immense breast-pins), "you would like to read it."

She took it eagerly, and her eyes grew so fond as she read, whilst a look so yearning entered her face—such an expression as the memory of her loneliness might put into her when she should meet her sweetheart again after their long separation—that I felt I acted sneakishly in watching her. She smiled happily when she came to the part in which Fraser spoke of her beauty, and when she had made an end she folded the letter carefully as though it were something precious, and pressed it between her hands as if it

was her sweetheart's own fingers she held.

It seemed to me as I surveyed her that my cousin exhibited uncommon courage in confiding so much beauty as this to the care and attention of a man whom he knew to be young and single, to say no more, for a spell of shipboard that might last for two or even three months. Our eyes met: her colour deepened somewhat, but her brilliant gaze was as steady as the shining of a star. There was a singularly engaging, most unaffected quality or tone of frankness in her voice.

"Alexander has asked you to do him a great favour. It is really *too great*." I seemed to dissent. "It is positively enough, Mr. Musgrave, that you should hire a cabin for me. To make the voyage also! And yet I know he would be overjoyed to see you. Still it is a tedious journey, and if you are like Alexander you detest the sea."

"No," said I, "I believe I shall enjoy a few weeks on the ocean. The fact is, madam, I want time to realize the thing, so to speak,—not to understand it, for of course it is intelligible enough, but to accustom my thoughts to it, you know;" and here I coughed and brought myself up "all standing" as sailors say, for indeed there was something in her shining steadfast gaze that caused me to talk as though I was ill at ease.

"Should you decide to be my companion, Mr. Musgrave," said she, "the voyage will be something to look forward to, greatly as I dislike the sea, or rather existence on board ship." I bowed. "But you will not dream of doing more than securing a cabin for me and helping me in one or two other ways,—if you have the least reluctance. It is quite possible that I may find a pleasant companion among the passengers—if there should be ladies on board. As a rule the captains and mates of the ships that trade to South America are a very rough and rude set of men. Should I be the only passenger, it is natural," she said,

with a little droop of the head, "that I should not choose to be alone in such society."

This was like an appeal in its way, and her manner of speaking rendered it irresistible. Besides, there was Fraser's letter calling upon me to protect her, imploring me as one who was as a brother to do him this great service, and these considerations coming on top of my concern for her loneliness and helplessness, my sympathy with her in the grief that was still recent, and above all the perception that she desired my company and that I should be acting unchivalrously to refuse her, made me whip out, "Miss Grant, it is settled. We sail together. There is nothing to keep me ashore. It will be delightful to meet Fraser again, and I shall find immense satisfaction in feeling that my enjoyment of your society also includes the pleasure of obliging you."

She clapped her hands with a gesture that was like telling you she had something besides English blood in her.

"How good you are! How glad you make me, Mr. Musgrave! I wonder what kind of ship we shall sail in?" she cried, with the vivacity of a mind that has suddenly lost its burden. "She must prove swift! She cannot sail too fast for me!" and here she told me of the vessel in which she and her father had made the voyage home—a clumsy, round-bowed polacca, apparently, that stirred to nothing less than half a gale of wind, and so leaky that the crew were at the pumps for fourteen hours out of the twenty-four; with a bow-legged, beef-faced old swab for captain, whose favourite boast was that he had once swallowed at a draught a bowl of punch containing ten half-pints of rum, whiskey, brandy and water. She described this man and his habits with so much humour as to give me a high opinion of her talent as an observer; and she made me laugh heartily by an account of a quarrel between him and his mate over a pudding—the latter (an Irishman)

beginning it by swearing that he had seen dried currants and raisins growing naturally like capers on trees, and the captain ending it by grasping a lump of the hot and steaming stuff and flinging it plump into the mate's face. Maybe something of the merriment of the tale and her delivery of it lay to my mind in the contrast between the rough sea-anecdote and the dignity, refinement, and beauty of the speaker. But I confess I liked her the better for her archness, and for her easy recital of a story which Miss Prim would consider rather vulgar since it referred to such *very* common people.

Our conversation presently went to her father. He died in the house in which she was still lodging, and she declared that when, after the funeral, she sat down to reflect she did not know what in the world she should do. She had not a friend in England, and of her mother's relatives in Spain she knew nothing. The few pounds her father had left were fast giving out, and she frankly told me that the money she still had would not have carried her on another month. "Why did you not call upon me?" I asked her. But it seems that Fraser had omitted to give my address in the last letter but one he sent to her, and it was only a week or two before he wrote that he had learnt it from my friend whose ship had been forced into Rio.

I was with her for two hours, and never did time pass more pleasantly and quickly. We arranged that I should call for her next day and accompany her to the shops she had occasion to visit, and afterwards make inquiries about the next ship and start on all the necessary preparations for the voyage. She cried when she said good-bye to me. Indeed she had suffered grievously, and now that the darkness was passing she could not meet the first of the dawn without tears.

As to myself, I hardly knew whether my resolution made me glad or sorry

when I came to turn it over. The girl was exceedingly handsome, but then she was not *my* sweetheart. Had her heart been her own a voyage with her must have yielded me a prospect that could not have left me doubting whether I was right in this adventure. But as my cousin's betrothed she was the same to me as if she was his wife. There was no room for sentiment. I was young enough to take this into consideration, and I say, when I reflected upon my determination, I could not satisfy myself that my judgment was as brilliant as my heroism.

On the following morning I called at her lodgings and afterwards passed some hours in watching her whilst she shopped and in paying for her purchases. There was a dignified frankness about her that was very fascinating, and not the less so because it was tinctured with melancholy. Her fine eyes expressed so much spirit, there was so much power in the curve and set of her lips, such suggestion of self-reliance in the peculiar floating pose of her head, I felt persuaded that a very great deal of the heroine went to her composition, that she was a woman whose qualities would best discover themselves in a time of extremity, a person by nature so ardent that no theory about her could touch the limits of the romantic exploits she was equal to in the service of the man she loved. These were my thoughts as I sat watching her whilst she handled the stuffs the shopmen put before her, frequently turning to me to speak, when I would notice that every sudden confrontation of her full beauty surprised me as a fresh revelation.

She managed to buy all she needed in one day, which I thought very clever and very kind also. "How long," said I, "will it take you to prepare for the voyage?"

"Oh," she answered, "if you were to tell me the ship sails to-morrow I should be quite ready."

I told her that I would devote the

next day to making inquiries and arrangements, and would do myself the pleasure to call in the evening and let her know what I had done. "At all events," said I, "you would wish me to book ourselves for the next ship?"

"If you please," she answered with anxiety.

"In which case," I observed, "we must not be fastidious. The best procurable cabins will satisfy us and the skipper's appearance need not count. Yet it will not do to sail away in a vessel whose seams yawn and whose hold has been abandoned by the rats. I have some small knowledge of ships, and if the first that offers is not as she should be we must wait for the next."

"I will leave everything to you," she said, "only," looking around with a light shudder—we were conversing in her lodgings—"I am so very weary of this gloomy house, this dull street; so longing to see my dear one again and the bright sun and the flowers of my own home."

"I will do my best," I exclaimed; "there should be and perhaps will be a choice of ships. If we have to wait, you will suffer me to find you pleasanter quarters."

And with that I bade her good-bye and left her.

CHAPTER III.

THE IRON CROWN.

In those days a large number of vessels bound to all parts of the world loaded in the Pool, a little way below London Bridge. Steam then was young, and not much was made of it. I have lived to see steamers trading to South America big enough to stow away in their holds many of the sailing vessels which were then carrying goods and passengers to all parts of the world. It is difficult in this age to realize the kind of experiences our forefathers suffered when they took ship—it mattered little to what countries—if it were not the

ports to which the Indiamen were despatched. I have heard my mother say that in her young days country people who proposed a trip to London would make their wills before entering the coach. I do not know that the coach was much more dangerous than the locomotive, but I am certain that there were no limits to the perils which menaced the ocean-borne traveller in the time of the little passenger-ship and smaller passenger-brig; when the sailor was still an exceeding rough son of a gun, charged to the throat with the traditional infirmities of his calling; when no special qualifications were insisted upon as conditions of a man taking charge of a vessel; when ships sailed without side-lights, and when collisions were averted by the easy remedy of whipping the lamp out of the binnacle and flourishing it over the rail; when the cabin-provisions were only a little less coarse than the forecastle-fare, and when a passage that is now made in a week occupied two or three months.

I had obtained the addresses of a few brokers and owners in the South American trade hoping thus to find two or three ships proceeding much about the same time, but it turned out that the first vessel on the berth sailed next day and that her cabin accommodation was full. Her name, I remember, was the *Amazon*. The next vessel, a brig named the *Iron Crown*, did not sail until the 23rd, so that even if she satisfied me we should have to wait eight days. The office of the owner of this craft was in Tower Hill, and whilst I was inquiring about her cabin-accommodation the person to whom I was speaking, motioning towards a man who had entered a moment before, exclaimed :

"Here is the master himself, sir, Captain Guy Broadwater, and he will tell you that a stouter, swifter, more comfortable ship than the *Iron Crown* never sailed out of an English port. Captain, you will confirm me. What is it now," inclining his head and

screwing up one eye as if in thought, "on a bowline with you! A cool thirteen, I believe?" Indeed," he cried, chafing his hands and grinning, "we may safely consider the good ship *Iron Crown* the one favourite trader between Rio and the Thames."

"Well," said Captain Broadwater in the hoarse voice of a man who has broken his pipes by rum and years of bawling aloft in gales, "it isn't for me to praise the *Iron Crown*, sir. She can speak for herself. She only needs to know that a man's eye is upon her to talk out. Handsome! Well I knew old Jarge Rowley who laid her keel, and always reckoned him a man without the least flavey of sentiment in his intellects until this here *Iron Crown* was launched and lay floating, and then I says to myself, 'Broadwater,' I says, 'swaller your own precious eyes, mate, if Jarge ain't a poet!'"

"You hear what the captain says, sir?" cried the other continuing to chafe his hands.

I took a short survey of Captain Guy Broadwater, and there stood before me a wide-shouldered, exceedingly muscular man of fifty, short, with iron-gray hair and a beard that hung like a bush at his throat, the chin being shaved. He had the smallest eyes I ever saw, and their colour as I now took stock of them seemed red, but I afterwards discovered that this was due to congestion caused by rheumatism, or punch, or both. His nose was of the exact shape of a pear, and being purple at the nostrils and point looked as if it had been lately stung by a bee. His mouth on the other hand was so small as to correspond, as a deformity, with his eyes. When he was not speaking he seemed from the posture of his lips to be trying, but in vain, to whistle. The skin of his face was much burnt by the weather, and it was adorned with a strange subcutaneous filigree-work, or net rather let me term it, of dusky crimson meshes. He was dressed in pilot-cloth, and carried in his hand a bell-shaped beaver, the brim

of which was large enough to furnish out a bishop. Yet ugly and queer as he was, there was nothing whatever in his appearance to offend or prejudice me. I put him down at once as a coarse, unlettered, but good-natured sailor of the hearty lively type, whose physical peculiarities were to a certain extent to be attributed to bad victuals in early life, to too much liquor later on, and throughout to the rough usage of the vocation of the sea when followed before the mast. I told him that I was glad to make his acquaintance, and that I had called with the intention of taking a passage in his ship, though I would not decide until I had inspected her.

"Sir," said he, "I am going aboard myself when I have done my business with this gentleman, and if you don't mind lettin' go your anchor here for five minutes I'll carry ye straight to the vessel."

They withdrew to an inner office where I could hear the growling voice of my captain mingling with the sharp-edged tones of his owner as though there were a mastiff and a pug tumbling and larking behind the door.

The skipper presently emerged and put on his broad-brimmed hat, in which he made so strange a figure that I could scarce forbear a laugh. We walked to the river and were rowed to a brig that was moored in mid-stream.

"Here she is!" cried Captain Broadwater, "look at her, sir! Was there ever beautifuller lines! Observe the lovely swell of the side! It might be the breast of a duck, sir. Mark how clean she comes to the starn-post. In my opinion she's too good to use; she's properer for a show."

There is no reason why he should not have been in earnest, for, as her master, it was conceivable that he should be proud of her. For my part, however, I could find no hint of the charms which threw him into raptures. The vessel was a stout brig of three hundred tons, an excellent sea-boat, no doubt, with the scantling of a line-of-battle ship, but she was certainly no

beauty. She was painted black, with a narrow yellow streak running the length of her sides, and had been newly coppered to the bends; the lustre of the bright metal was under her and she seemed to float in a little surface of pale sunshine. She was loftily rigged for a craft of her size and carried exceedingly square yards, whence I inferred that with her studding sails abroad she could expand canvas enough in a breeze of wind to start an island from its moorings. We gained the side, climbed up a stout rope-ladder and jumped aboard.

There was a lighter on the starboard bow and a number of intoxicated lumpers were hoisting in cargo. It should have been no new scene to me, yet I found it confusing enough. The sails were unbent, and the running rigging unrove, so there were no ropes' ends to trip over. Nevertheless the decks were encumbered with all sorts of "raffle," as sailors term lumber—casks, hencoops, sacks, planks, and I know not what else besides. There was a full-rigged ship a short distance off getting her anchor, and the fellows at the windlass were roaring out with hurricane lungs one of the many working songs with which the British seaman inspires his heart and nerves his hands and legs. The melody awoke echoes long ago silent in me. It was at Cape Town that I had heard it last, and the rough salt air brought the picture before me in a vision so clear, sunbright, real—the blue waters of the wide haven, the groups of ivory-white houses upon the low shore, the polished azure back of the huge Atlantic comber poising its arched summit in a ridge of glassy opal light for a breath ere thundering its burthen of snow upon the beach, the great mountains beyond with streaks of lace-like mist crawling along their brows, as though the viewless spirits of the blue atmosphere up there were spinning a white fabric of exquisite delicacy out of their airy looms for the adornment of those giants' heads—that I seemed to waken with a start to Captain

Broadwater's invitation to step below and view the cabin.

One hears of the Swiss weeping when some one tunes up their national cow-strain. Mariners are a people who have no tears to spare : what they possess in that way they devote to their private woes ; but I do think nothing so stirs a man who has been a sailor as the melody of a forecastle chorus. 'Tis like the wand of a wizard : the curtain rises to it and there before you lies the past—the rolling ocean, the gallant fabric in whose heart you scoured your thousand leagues of sea, your hearty shipmates, the gay Saturday carousal, the girl in the distant home from whose sunny head you snicked the golden wisp, which many a time you have pressed to your lips in some mid-ocean solitude, when there was nobody but the man in the moon and the man at the wheel to see what you were at.

"I have been a sailor myself, captain," said I, as I followed him to the companion-hatch : "and the sound of that stormy chorus out yonder makes me feel a bit swabbish, do you know, for quitting the old life."

"Bin a sailor yourself, hey?" he cried, rounding when at the bottom of the ladder to take a view of me. "Well, an' I dessay it did ye no harm. There's worse people knocking about the world than sailors, though I haven't much respect for that class of 'em which goes by the name of Hands."

"I see. Your sympathies are aft."

"Well, I don't know about that either," he exclaimed rather warmly, as though he objected to my considering that he had any sympathies at all, and methought that his pear-shaped nose as he spoke took a deeper dye ; then with a flourish of the arm he said, "this here's the cabin. A noble room, sir. Must board the Indiamen to find the like of it."

The vessel had so much beam that her cabin was larger than I had expected to find it. The furniture was simple enough : a table, lockers for seats, snuff-coloured bulkheads with-

out any sort of ornamentation. At the after end were four cabins, two of a side, whilst forward were other but smaller berths.

"That end's for the passengers," said the captain, pointing aft.

I inspected the accommodation and found it airy and roomy.

"Which are to let?" I asked.

"All," he replied ; "how many of you are there, sir?"

"Myself and a lady."

"I reckon there'll be no more then," said he. "Here's four beautiful bedrooms to choose from."

"Where do *you* sleep?"

"Forwards there," said he, pointing with his nose as a negro does with his chin. "Me an' my first mate lodges there. The bo'sun who sarves as second mate lies in the fo'k'sle. There's no interference. You'll be as private as a chick in its egg. Case of more coming I'd take the two foremost berths, if I was you. The helm don't feel to kick so much there, and if the chap at the wheel should warm his toes by stamping you won't hear him plain."

I should have been better pleased with a vessel of twice the burthen of this craft ; but then to be sure we should start in the height of the summer when the Bay of Biscay is least formidable—though let me remember that the heaviest gale I was ever in was fifty miles south of Ushant in the month of July—and once clear of those waters we had a right to look for quiet weather during the rest of the passage. The short chat I had with Broadwater on returning on deck confirmed my first impression of him : he was indeed no very polished companion for ladies, but he was well enough as sea-captains of his class and in his trade then went. I was not surprised to find that the vessel did not carry a stewardess. You had to look to the height of the Indiamen in those days for luxuries of this kind. I asked him what sort of table he kept.

"An A 1 copper-bottom table," he

answered. "Salt beef of the primest—roast pork—poultry twice a week—currant dumplings—taking it all round, a list nigh as long as my arm."

"Pretty substantial," I exclaimed.

"Ay," said he, grinning, "there's never no twopenny kickshaws to be found aboard of me. No hishee-hashees here, sir, with French names. All's good solid eating,—dishes which makes a man feel that he's dined when he gets up. Give me food that'll coil a chap's appetite down for him. That's why, to my notion, there's ne'er a bit of vittles on this airth to beat a good leg o' roast pork."

I gathered from these observations that Miss Grant and I were not likely to be invariably entertained to our tastes, and that it would therefore be necessary to lay in a stock of wines and stores for our separate use; and having ascertained that I was at liberty to fill one of the hencoops with poultry for ourselves, and that if the other cabins were unlet one of them was at my service as a larder, I took leave of him, and was rowed ashore, and without further ado walked to Tower Hill and engaged two berths in the brig Iron Crown, Broadwater master. Also, at this office, to save time, I wrote a letter to my cousin, in which I named the vessel we were to sail in and the date of our departure, and handed it to the owner of the Iron Crown to transmit with despatches of his own to Rio by the ship Amazon proceeding next day.

CHAPTER IV.

WE EMBARK.

As the brig did not sail for another week and as we intended to join her at Deal, which would give us two or three days ashore beyond the date of her departure from the Thames, I procured rooms for Miss Grant in a private hotel near Bond Street, so that I was within convenient reach and saw much of her. In truth the poverty and melancholy of the street in which she had lodged rendered the very name of

it intolerable to her, and the gloomy influence of the house upon her spirits was made more oppressive yet by the recollection of her father's sufferings and death and her own privation in it.

The change from such lodgings to the comforts of a hotel, the sudden removal from her mind of the distracting burthen of poverty and anxiety, the feeling that I was by her side and that she had a protector in me, and that in a few weeks she would be with her sweetheart and married to him, combined to make another woman of her in those eight or ten days. Her eyes shone with a clearer light, and their dark luminous depths gathered a softness beyond description from the happiness that was in her. A delicate bloom lay upon her cheeks, her laugh was sincere, her smiles full of an honest gaiety. As we walked together I would notice that both men and women stopped to stare after her. I remember an old dandy with his hat cocked and a tuft on his chin, coming to a dead stand on seeing her, then following us and passing as an excuse to turn again to have another look. I will not say that she was insensible to the admiration she excited—she would have been no true woman to feign such a thing—but I cannot conceive that any girl could have shown herself less affected by it.

We took the coach for Deal early on a Friday morning. The journey was long and tedious. It was after sunset when we sat down to the dinner I had ordered in a quaint hotel that looked directly upon the sea; but the moon rode high, clear as crystal in the dark blue air, and her glorious reflection came to the very margin of the beach upon whose shingle the rippling summer breakers trembled into snow in a fan-shaped path of glory that floated as steadily upon the quiet surface as the orb herself in the breathless sky.

After dinner we walked to the esplanade. The luggers lying high and dry looked hoary in the clear and icy light: the seaward-gazing windows sparkled out to the gush of the radi-

ance in silver stars ; every shadow lay like an ebony carving upon a sand-white ground. Far away, past the yellow winking spots of the signal lanterns floating off the Goodwins, was the fitful flashing of violet lightning. The planets hung large and burnt richly, and clear of the sphere of mist-like radiance that circled the moon, the stars shone in such numbers that I never remember witnessing the heavens so crowded. After the roaring of metropolitan streets, the low washing sound of the surf along the coast was inexpressibly soothing and refreshing, and one's blood coursed to the cool sweetness of the ocean atmosphere as to a draught of rare and generous cordial.

There were many ships in the Downs, wan and spectral in the moonshine. Their riding-lights resembled a swarm of fire-flies. By bending the ear you caught from the nearer vessels the sounds of laughter, the thin strains of a concertina, the clank of a chain cable dragged along the deck ; or from the further distance the faint chorusing of a crew pulling and hauling aboard some hidden craft that had softly sneaked into the Downs on the top of the subtle tide.

"Which amid that ashen muddle of ships out yonder will be ours, I wonder ?" said I.

"How ghostly is the atmosphere that is made by moonlight at sea !" exclaimed Miss Grant sending her glance along the shining wake of the luminary, and then looking into the eastern darkness and talking as if she spoke to herself. "It must be the low-lying stars, I think, which cause the distance to appear so terribly remote. The beauty of such a night as this used to awe me when we were coming to England—it does so now, though I am on dry land. It should be as lovely to me as to others, but it is not so. The mystery of it is too great—the mystery of the silence and the pale air and the whispering of the sea along the shore."

"It may be that what is mysterious

cannot be beautiful," said I, finding talk of this sort a little above my art, though not wanting her to think that I did not understand her either. " Yet I don't know. I have seen eyes in my time as secret as the dark sea yonder, and they were wonderfully beautiful, I assure you."

As I said this a rumbling voice close behind me exclaimed, "Bort, sir ! beautiful noight for a row, sir ! Water smooth as satin, lady."

I turned and observed a Deal boatman.

"No—we shall have enough of the sea presently. Can you tell me if a vessel named the Iron Crown has brought up off here ?"

"What's she loike ?" he asked.

"A brig," I said, "three hundred tons, newly sheathed, painted black with a yellow stripe."

"Is her capt'n a man with werry small eyes an' a nose loike a sailor's duff ?"

"That's right."

"Then she brought up just afore sundown. Oi was off fishin' with a party at the time, and the chap Oi've described sung out to me to git out of the road ;" and he pointed seawards with a shadowy hand, but it was impossible to distinguish any one ship among the congregation there. He hung about me a little as though he would engage me in further conversation and then said, "Werry thirsty weather, sir." I gave him the value of a glass of ale and he left us.

"At the head of human disenchancers," said I, "stands the British long-shoreman with his cry of 'Bort, sir.'"

"Hark !" exclaimed my companion lifting her finger.

It was half-past nine, and the bells out upon the water were sounding the hour. There were probably two hundred sail in the Downs ; the tinkling ran in ripples as though a wave of air raised scores of metallic echoes of different tones as it swept onwards. Some of the bells sounded simultaneously ; some followed one another

in chimes ; a few were mellow, many shrill, more yet of a silver singing cadence. From the pallid remoteness the tones came in faint and tiny sounds, after which fell the silence and you heard nothing but the fountain-like seething of foam upon the shingle.

We returned to the hotel, but I lingered, after Miss Grant had retired, for a long hour upon the balcony overlooking the sea, smoking a cigar and musing much on the girl and my cousin Fraser and the voyage on which we should probably start next day. The moon hung over the Downs, and through the steady rain of her silver twinkled the yellow sparks of the ships' lights. There was a lugger heading for Deal and coming fair down the middle of the ice-like path upon the waters. She floated black against the tremulous shining that went up behind her to the sea-line, and as you marked her sweeps or long oars rising and falling you would have imagined her some gigantic marine insect stealthily creeping shorewards. From every lifted blade the water dripped to the moonshine in diamonds and the *cheep, cheep* of the oars grinding betwixt the thole-pins sent the fancy roaming to the tropic swamp and to the mysterious croakings of the tree-toad.

I was up betimes, but Miss Aurelia was before me. She looked as fresh and as fragrant as Cowper's rose newly washed by a shower.

"The sea," said I, "promises to use you kindly."

"Yes, and I feel well, too, which is better than looking so."

She was robed in black, her dress fitted her excellently, her hair was coiled into the likeness of a crown, her dark eyes were full of fire and life. I did not much like to think of her as being obliged to sit and converse with such a man as Broadwater and with such people as his mates were tolerably certain to prove. But it could not be helped ; though when the captain's purple face came into my head I felt

that I should have been ungenerous and mean indeed to have suffered her to sail alone. There was a light breeze from the southward. The upward-bound vessels had got under way, and the picture was gay and brilliant with the crowded white canvas of the numerous craft, the sparkling of the sun in the running waters, the fitful flashings of the wet oars of boats, the light blue sky with a stretch of ivory-like crescents of clouds, resembling new moons linked and compacted going down to the sea-line, where a leaning sail or two gleamed like little obelisks of Parian marble. Miss Grant came to my side and we stood gazing together. Presently a waiter arrived, asked if my name was Musgrave, and said there was a gentleman inquiring for me. A moment or two afterwards Captain Broadwater entered.

He gave Miss Grant a bow that was a sheer convulsion in its way, and said, "I thought I'd look in here, sir, afore I went aboard. There'll be nothing to keep us when you and the lady are over the side. There's not much weight in this here wind, but the tide sarves, and I'm never for waiting when there's a chance to get away."

"You are very right," said I ; "but we haven't breakfasted yet, captain. There's time enough for that, I hope ?" and thinking he was going to object, I added, "You'll join us ? Nothing like shore-going food and cooking down to the last moment."

He answered that he had already breakfasted, but that on reflection he felt himself equal to another meal, and the waiter arriving with the ham and coffee we sat down. I have seen men with immense appetites in my day, but no man who ever came near to Broadwater in this way. It was not only the quantity he devoured ; it was the rapidity with which he ate. He took a hot roll, tore the crumb out, buttered and then bolted the whole without winking and in a breath. He picked up an egg-spoon, and after in-

specting it an instant, called the waiter and asked him what it was. The waiter explained. "Bring me a proper spoon!" he roared in a voice that caused Miss Grant to start and glance at me with a little air of consternation. The man handed him a dessert-spoon with which he struck the egg as though it had been a sailor's head, then scooped out the inside and swallowed the whole, afterwards seizing another egg, all so quickly that it was like watching the performance of a conjuror. He never offered to speak a word until he had eaten as much breakfast as would have sufficed me for a week, though he made an end before Miss Grant and I had fairly begun. My companion looked at me as if she would say, I told you what sort of people the captains are in this trade! I was more struck, however, by his manner of roaring to the waiter than by the rest of his behaviour. "If this is not a ship's bully all of the olden time," I thought to myself, "let his appetite be called delicate."

He now began to tell me in a hoarse voice about his passage down the river to the Downs, and how a West Indiaman in bringing up at midnight had fouled his cable and nearly run aboard him. "But," said he, "there's no seamanship to be expected from the men who gets command of them big ships. They're hired for their faces and their tricks of speechifying and caper-cutting and grinning out answers without losing their tempers when the ladies bother 'em with questions. Put them into a situation that requires real nautical knowledge and they can only stand and look on. If you want to be cut down, or your spars brought about your ears, them's the gents to show ye how it's done."

All this was very pig-headed talk; but if he should prove, as I suspected, full of salt-prejudices and antique sea-notions, I at all events should not be without one favourite source of diversion during the voyage.

Our baggage was on board the brig. The little we had with us was

conveyed to one of the vessel's boats that was lying off the beach waiting for the captain. Miss Grant sprang to the gunwale and thence to a thwart with inimitable grace that was full of a generous disdain of the extended hand of one of the seamen. I followed, and Broadwater bundled in after me. "Shove off!" he bawled as though in a passion. The boat's head was slewed for the brig, and the three men fell to their oars.

There were fifty things to admire as our little keel was swept forwards: the gray bald stare of the Foreland point with the sheen of the chalk trembling off it upon the blue atmosphere beyond; the ships still at anchor growing large to our approach, their glossy sides twinkling to the rippling lustre in the water like the tremble of sunlight amid the shadows of dancing leaves; the sudden flash of a cabin-window to the movement of the hull as though a cannon had been fired from it; the various colours and devices of a dozen different nations' ensigns languidly fluttering their bright folds from masthead and peak; the line of green and yellow coast sweeping into an airy dimness of pallid cliff as wan in the distance of the brilliant north as the crescent of the moon floating in the noontide heavens; the quaint aspect of the hearty old smuggling town whose foreground of brown shingle gleamed black to the recoil of the washing breaker whilst it offered the saltest imaginable picture in the shape of fleets of yellow luggers high and dry, and the figures of boatmen lounging, scrubbing, mending nets, and boiling pitch-pots.

There were plenty of things, I say, to look at, yet I do not remember that I took notice of much outside the three men who were rowing us to the brig. They belonged of course to the ship's company. One was a half-blood of a dark olive complexion and eyes like sloes resting on slices of lemon. His hands were as small as a girl's beautifully shaped, though

corned and horny and palm-blackened by the tar and drudgery of shipboard. The others were plain ginger-haired British lobscousers—one with a beard of stubble that projected from his chin like the thatch of a sou'-wester, both knob-nosed and rugged as the shell of a walnut. Their feet were naked, their rough breasts lay bare to the light, their nervous muscular arms were decorated with bracelets, crucifixes, anchors, female figures, pricked in with the pale blue of the sailor's pigment. All three of them wore a sullen look—not the expression of evil-minded men, but of persons rendered sulky and resentful by ill-usage. I saw the half-blood glance at Miss Grant, and a sort of light broke upon his face and swept the dogged air out of it as a smile clears a sour brow; but his eye instantly went from her to Broadwater and fell, a singular look of loathing and hate darkened his countenance, and I witnessed the impulse of a violent emotion in him in the quick savage swing he gave his oar. It was like a curse!

Here were tokens not to please me who, as a man that had passed some years at sea, had preserved an eye for the interpretation of sailors' meanings. If the crew were dissatisfied at this early stage, then old Broadwater and his mates must have gone to work with an incredible promptitude to make their true characters known to them. Had they a grievance? Their provisions would have been fresh meat and loaves of bread down to this point, and they could not therefore know what the forecastle stores were like. Was the vessel leaky? It was to be hoped she was not. No! it could be nothing less than Broad-

water. Well, if the men were growling now, what would be their posture later on? I was sufficiently well acquainted with the character of merchant seamen to know that often the very best sailors amongst them are those who curse the deepest in their gizzards. I was also aware that there was nothing uncommon in a crew finding plenty of time and excuses to mutiny in a run from Blackwall to the Forelands, going ashore bag and baggage in a body, and obliging the ship to wait off Deal until the crimps could roll a new crew into her forecastle. All this was, as it still is, in the ordinary course of the ocean life. But the looks of the three thinly-clad fellows made you think of something more significant than the familiar causes of the forecastle rebellion.

However they pulled too briskly to give me time to consider them very attentively. The boat buzzed through the water, and the brig ahead rapidly enlarged upon the view.

"Is that the ship?" exclaimed Miss Grant.

I answered, yes.

"Is there anything afloat to beat her?" exclaimed Broadwater in a deep-sea voice.

The half-blood turned his head upon his shoulder as if he would have his mates observe what was in his mind by his look.

"Oars!" bawled the captain. "Out boat-hook, you dog!" to the man in the bows. "Good thunder!" he growled, "what is there to make the sojers who ship as sailors nowadays skip, if it ain't gunpowder in their shoes and a lighted match 'twixt their toes?"

We swang alongside and gained the deck.

(To be continued.)